

E. E. Pender · Images of Persons Unseen

Plato's Metaphors for the Gods and the Soul

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Volume 11

Images of Persons Unseen

Plato's Metaphors for the
Gods and the Soul

by

E. E. Pender

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For my grandmother

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1. The Cognitive Role of Metaphor

I. Introduction

The vital role of metaphor both in living language and in literary and philosophical discourse has been established by numerous critical studies in recent times. From linguistic structure to rhetorical power, from poetic to philosophical function, analyses across different disciplines have taken a number of distinct approaches to metaphor. My concern in this book is to determine the cognitive role of Plato's metaphors for the gods and the soul, that is, what part they play in the expression and elucidation of his philosophical theories and arguments. I have focused on the concepts of gods and the soul, abstract metaphysical concepts around which metaphors proliferate, in order to test the claim that metaphor has a special power to 'express the inexpressible'. The importance of metaphor in abstract discourse, whether theological, spiritual or scientific, has been widely recognised, but there are divergent views on the extent of metaphor's role: for some, metaphor is extremely useful; for others, it is utterly unique and irreplaceable.

While commentaries and articles have addressed the role and function of particular metaphors in Plato, there are few studies devoted to metaphor and imagery across the Platonic corpus. Of these, Pierre Louis' *Les Métaphores de Platon* (1945) serves mainly to catalogue the various types of metaphor, while P. Grenet's *Les Origines de l'analogie philosophique dans les dialogues de Platon* (1948) and A. de Marignac's *Imagination et dialectique* (1951), although more analytical, nevertheless only cover select aspects of this huge subject. Further, these authors were writing before the cognitive roles of metaphor and imagery were fully explored and recognised. More work is needed on the philosophical use of metaphor and imagery in Plato, work which would both advance interpretation of the dialogues and contribute to understanding of the cognitive functions of these linguistic forms so long ignored as mere ornamental devices.

Plato's literary skill in developing and using imagery is well documented, and many of his metaphors helped to form a philosophical tradition which is still influential today. Metaphor and imagery, along with other forms of verbal comparisons, play a central role in the dialogues and are active at all levels of discourse — everyday conversation, literary speeches, fantastical myths and the most rigorous technical explanations. Further, metaphor and imagery perform a wide range of functions in Plato, involving various tones and styles. Sometimes an image features as part of an opening conversational scene, where the figure is left undeveloped and the overall effect one of colourful idiomatic usage. Elsewhere metaphor helps to build up extended illustrations, where an image or comparison is carefully established, developed and then explicitly explored to illuminate a difficult concept. Readings of Plato's works will always benefit from a close study of the role of metaphor and imagery, and one of the conclusions of this project is that even the most casual and apparently trivial metaphor

in Plato can turn out to play an integral part in the wider philosophical concerns of a dialogue.

One book cannot hope to offer a comprehensive account of Plato's use of metaphor, for the subject is too vast. Even where the study is limited to particular areas of thought, as here, any attempt to give an overall, cross-dialogue view will necessarily involve the loss of perspective of each, individual dialogue as an artistic whole. The dangers of divorcing metaphors from their immediate context in particular dialogues are manifest: an isolated image can have a very different effect from the one intended as it was placed carefully in a particular setting. However, the attempt to view the bigger picture has some advantages, since the same images can be tracked at work in different contexts and can sometimes be analysed more easily in isolation. When viewed independently of context, a metaphor can emerge as part of a wider group of connected images. Such a connected group offers both a set of core, intrinsic features and the potential for development in different directions. Thus Plato can use metaphors from the same core group of images (for example, the soul having the faculty of sight) in quite different ways to suit his purposes in individual works. In such cases an awareness of the wider image-group and its potential will enable the reader to gain a clearer sense of why Plato chose to emphasise particular aspects of an image in any given context. Identifying and monitoring Plato's use of image-groups across various dialogues thus offers an illuminating perspective on Plato's methods and strategies as a writer. The key concern of this study, then, is to establish the philosophical role of metaphors in Plato, using as a framework various contemporary views on metaphor. I wish to examine the remarkable literary and linguistic products of this consummately skilful writer to determine just how powerful metaphor can be in the hands of a master of inventive and creative language. The areas of theological and psychological discourse have been chosen specifically for their challenging nature: if the fullest capacities and limitations of the form are to be revealed, then the study must examine metaphor when stretched to its limits. Such a demanding role for metaphor is required by Plato's abstract, metaphysical speculations.

One of the central issues of any study of this kind is the nature of metaphor itself. Too often in analyses of Plato's works the different categories of metaphor, imagery, analogy, simile and even myth are conflated, which not only results in confusion but also provides room for dismissive, blanket statements about the use of such 'literary' (for which, read 'merely literary') devices. Thus, in order to pay proper respect to Plato's use of metaphor and figurative language and to begin to determine their philosophical roles, the first step is to clarify what constitutes 'metaphorical' language and how metaphor differs from other tropes and figures.

II. Identifying Metaphors

The earliest definition of metaphor comes from Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the context of a classification of nouns metaphor is defined as an 'application' (Greek: ἐπιφορά — literally: a bringing upon or to) of a name that belongs to something else (1457b7 ff.):

μεταφορά δέ ἐστιν ὀνόματος ἀλλοτρίου ἐπιφορά ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους ἐπὶ εἶδος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἐπὶ τὸ γένος ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ εἴδους ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἀνάλογον.

A *metaphor* is the application of a noun which properly applies to something else. The transfer may be from genus to species, from species to genus, from species to species, or by analogy (tr. Heath).

Aristotle classifies metaphor among types of non-standard usages which dignify speech (1458a18 ff.):

Λέξεως δὲ ἀρετὴ σαφὴ καὶ μὴ ταπεινὴν εἶναι. σαφεστάτη μὲν οὖν ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν κυρίων ὀνομάτων, ἀλλὰ ταπεινὴ. παράδειγμα δὲ ἡ Κλεοφῶντος ποιήσις καὶ ἡ Σθενέλου. σεμνὴ¹ δὲ καὶ ἐξαλλάττουσα τὸ ἰδιωτικὸν ἢ τοῖς ξενικοῖς κεχρημένη. ξενικὸν δὲ λέγω γλῶτταν καὶ μεταφορὰν καὶ ἐπέκτασιν καὶ πᾶν τὸ παρὰ τὸ κύριον.

The most important quality in diction is clarity, provided there is no loss of dignity. The clearest diction is that based on current words; but that lacks dignity (as can be seen from the poetry of Cleophon, and that of Sthenelus). By contrast, diction is distinguished and out of the ordinary when it makes use of exotic expressions — by which I mean non-standard words, metaphor, lengthening, and anything contrary to current usage (tr. Heath).

Thus Aristotle regards the application or transposition of an 'alien name' as an instance of non-standard language use and so metaphor is defined as a noun employed 'contrary to current usage' (παρὰ τὸ κύριον). This distinction between current, ordinary usage and that which is out of the ordinary or non-standard is an essential factor in identifying metaphors. However, determining ordinary usage in any language is not necessarily easy or straightforward, as will be discussed below.

¹ The view that metaphor is a device for adorning language had also been expressed earlier by Isocrates (*Evagoras* 9-10): 'Τοῖς μὲν γὰρ ποιηταῖς πολλοὶ δέδονται κόσμοι καὶ γὰρ κλησιάζοντας τοὺς θεοὺς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οἶον τ' αὐτοῖς ποιῆσαι καὶ διαλεγόμενους καὶ συναγωνιζομένους οἷς ἂν βουληθῶσιν, καὶ περὶ τούτων δηλῶσαι μὴ μόνον τοῖς τεταγμένοις ὀνόμασιν, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὲν ξένοις, τὰ δὲ καινοῖς, τὰ δὲ μεταφοραῖς, καὶ μηδὲν παραλιπεῖν, ἀλλὰ πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔδεσιν διαποικίλαι τὴν ποιήσιν' (For to the poets is granted the use of many embellishments of language, since they can represent the gods as associating with men, conversing with and aiding in battle whomsoever they please and they can treat of those subjects not only in conventional expressions, but in words now exotic, now newly coined and now in figures of speech [metaphors], neglecting none, but using every kind with which to embroider their poesy; (tr. van Hook). Compare *Poetics* 1458a 31 and *Rhetoric* at 1404b 5.

In his highly influential book, *La Métaphore vive*,² Paul Ricoeur has explored Aristotle's analysis of metaphor with great sensitivity and has developed in response to it a distinctive and compelling account of the centrality of metaphor in living language. Two aspects of Aristotle's definition on which Ricoeur focuses are (*LMV*, pp. 23-4): '*la métaphore est quelque chose qui arrive au nom*' and '*la métaphore est définie en termes de mouvement*'.³ Ricoeur rejects the location of metaphor at the level of the noun and indeed seeks counter-evidence for this view even in the works of Aristotle. As he says, his study is (p. 34): '*attentive à recueillir tous les indices d'une interprétation de la métaphore en termes de discours, à contre-courant de la définition explicite en termes de nom et de dénomination*'.⁴ In moving his focus from the level of the word to the level of discourse Ricoeur acknowledges a debt to I.A. Richards (p. 100) and supports Richard's analysis of metaphor as comprising two elements: tenor and vehicle.⁵ Thus metaphor is the product of the mutual relation of two concepts (p. 106): '*c'est la présence simultanée de la "teneur" et du "véhicule" et leur interaction qui engendrent la métaphore*'.⁶ The metaphor lies not simply in the presence of the vehicle but is '*le tout constitué par les deux moitiés*' (p. 106). This move from word to discourse leads Ricoeur to classify metaphor not as a trope (a substitution at the level of the word) but as a figure — a term which refers to changes of meaning equally at the level of word, statement or discourse (see pp. 63-4, 71-2 and 175-6). For Ricoeur, then, 'metaphor' is not the application of an alien name but is (p. 220) '*l'énoncé entier avec son sens nouveau*'.⁷

Ricoeur notes that for Aristotle metaphor is the transposition of a name from its ordinary or current application to a new, unfamiliar one, and, commenting on the idea of movement involved in the metaphoric process, observes on Aristotle's use of the term *epiphora* (p. 24): '*l'epiphora d'un mot est décrite comme une sorte de déplacement de . . . vers . . .*'.⁸ In response to this identification of metaphor as a word used contrary to current usage (*παρά τὸ κύριον*, *Poetics* 1458a23; *παρά τὸ εἰωθός*,

² Henceforth: *LMV*.

³ Czerny translates, 'metaphor is something that happens to the noun' (p. 16) and 'metaphor is defined in terms of movement' (p. 17).

⁴ Czerny translates, 'at pains to assemble all indications of an interpretation of metaphor in terms of discourse as against its explicit definition in terms of names and naming' (p. 24).

⁵ I.A. Richards in *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* identified two subjects in metaphor: tenor and vehicle (p. 96). The 'tenor' is the principal subject while the 'vehicle' is the subsidiary, external idea introduced by the metaphor. For example, in the metaphorical phrase 'the ship of state', 'state' is the tenor, the subject under discussion, while the idea of the 'ship' is the 'vehicle'. The theory of interaction which developed from Richards' theory of 'interanimation' will be explored further in the section on the epistemic thesis of metaphor's cognitive role.

⁶ Czerny translates (p. 81), 'The simultaneous presence of the tenor and vehicle and their interaction engender the metaphor.'

⁷ Czerny translates, 'the entire statement with its new meaning' (p. 172).

⁸ Czerny translates, 'The *epiphora* of a word is described as a sort of displacement, a movement "from . . . to . . ."' (p. 17).

1458b3), Ricoeur introduces the key term 'écart' (deviation) which will shape his own account (p. 26): 'La métaphore est ainsi définie en termes d'écart'.

Using Max Black's identification of metaphor as a complex of words in which some terms are understood literally and others metaphorically,⁹ Ricoeur (*LMV*) explores the semantic challenge that arises from this contrastive or disjunctive relation and offers a comprehensive account of the semantics of metaphor, drawing together Beardsley's idea of 'verbal opposition' (pp. 125-6), Le Guern's analysis of 'semantic incompatibility' ('l'incompatibilité sémantique', pp. 230-8), Henle's 'clash', (pp. 238-42), and Cohen's notion of 'impertinence' as a violation of the language code which leads to the production and subsequent reduction of deviation (pp. 192-201). Ricoeur adopts this analysis of metaphor as a two-stage process and (in Le Guern's terminology) observes (p. 232): 'l'interprétation de la métaphore n'est possible en effet que si l'on a d'abord aperçu l'incompatibilité du sens non figuré du lexème avec le reste du contexte'.¹⁰ It is this perception of incompatibility that Henle describes as a 'clash', the moment that stimulates the reader to seek a resolution of meaning (p. 242):

c'est le conflit . . . au niveau littéral; si le contexte permet de s'en tenir au sens littéral de certains termes, il l'interdit pour d'autres. Mais le conflit n'est pas encore la métaphore, celle-ci en est plutôt la résolution; sur la base de quelques indices . . . fournis par le contexte, il faut décider quels termes peuvent être pris figurativement et quels autres non; il faut donc élaborer . . . le parallélisme des situations qui guidera la transposition iconique de l'une à l'autre.¹¹

For Ricoeur, then (p. 195), 'la métaphore n'est pas l'écart lui-même, mais la réduction de l'écart' and in turn metaphorical meaning (p. 271) 'n'est pas l'énigme elle-même, la simple collision sémantique, mais la solution de l'énigme, l'instauration de la nouvelle pertinence sémantique'.¹² So a metaphor is a two-stage process whereby first a deviation is detected between the non-figurative meaning of a word and the rest of its context which leads to a tension or contradiction — the 'clash' — and second a resolution is found which results in a new pertinence, that is, a new meaning for the whole phrase. Deviation and the semantic clash requiring resolution are the essential markers

⁹ Black (*Models and Metaphors*, p. 39) identifies metaphor as the interaction between the 'focus' of the metaphorical word and the 'frame' of the rest of the sentence.

¹⁰ Czerny translates, 'interpretation of metaphor is not possible unless one first perceives the incompatibility of the non-figurative meaning of the lexeme with the rest of the context' (pp. 182-3).

¹¹ Czerny translates (pp. 190-1), 'It is the "clash" . . . on the literal level that leads one to seek out a meaning beyond the lexical meaning; while the context allows one to maintain the literal sense of certain terms, it prevents one from doing so for others. However, metaphor is not quite the clash itself, but rather its resolution. One must decide, on the basis of various "clues" . . . provided by the context, which terms can be taken figuratively and which cannot. One must therefore "work out" . . . the parallelism between situations that will guide the iconic transposition of one to the other.'

¹² Czerny translates, 'metaphor is not deviation itself, but the reduction of deviation' (p. 152); 'not the enigma itself, the semantic clash pure and simple, but the solution of the enigma, the inauguration of the new semantic pertinence' (p. 214). See also Ricoeur *LMV*, p. 246.

and defining features of metaphor. In order to clarify the use of terms in this study, it will be necessary first to distinguish metaphor from other figures and second to discuss the relationship between metaphorical and literal language, a central issue in the project of identifying metaphors.

1. Metaphor and Other Figures

In this study metaphor will be treated as a purely linguistic phenomenon. It will not be classed as a form of non-verbal expression, as in a phrase such as 'the action/event/picture is a metaphor for creation', nor as a mode of reasoning. The view that metaphor is itself a type of thought-process is familiar from various contemporary studies.¹³ Mark Johnson¹⁴ includes metaphor in his list of types of 'imaginative structures of understanding' (p. xi), and sees it as operating beyond linguistic usage. For Johnson, metaphor is (pp. xiv-xv) 'a pervasive mode of understanding by which we project patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind'. On this view, as he clarifies, metaphor is (p. xv) 'not merely a linguistic mode of expression; rather, it is one of the chief cognitive structures by which we are able to have coherent, ordered experiences that we can reason about and make sense of'. This approach, now established in cognitive psychology, offers a rich seam for further interdisciplinary research into how human beings make sense of their world. For example, J.P. van Noppen in *Metaphor and Religion* acknowledges the value of this approach to metaphor in the field of religious studies (p. 5). However, the view of metaphor as a thought-process has certain drawbacks which, although perhaps less significant in the wider field, nevertheless become significant in the analysis of metaphor in a literary text. For example, in the first essay in van Noppen's collection, S. Sawatzky states: 'What we are really saying is that human thought is metaphorical'.¹⁵ From this global statement he then goes on to use the terms 'metaphor' and 'associational activity' interchangeably. Now, while there is indeed an 'associational mode of human thought' and while metaphorical expression is indeed a product of this, it is surely unhelpful to conflate the unique features of metaphor with a whole class of 'associational' activities in both thought and speech. For such a use represents a considerable weakening of the term 'metaphorical' and obscures the distinctive features of metaphor which set it apart from operations of thought and from other figures of speech. Such a weakening can result in unfortunate statements such as, 'when an analogy seems obvious, the same metaphor is found in various languages'¹⁶ — where the boundaries between the two categories are simply ignored. My approach, then, will be to treat metaphor as a purely linguistic phenomenon, whose nature serves to distin-

¹³ For the recent literature on metaphor as a form of thought, see references in David E. Leary, 'Psyche's muse: the role of metaphor in the history of psychology', ch. 1 (pp. 1-78) in Leary (ed.), p. 1.

¹⁴ *The Body in the Mind*, preface p. xi.

¹⁵ S. Sawatzky, 'Metaphor, cognition and culture', p. 10.

¹⁶ Sawatzky, p. 11.

guish it from other categories such as model and analogy which include the non-linguistic.¹⁷

a) Allegory and Myth

The location of metaphor at the level of the sentence or phrase clarifies the distinction between metaphor on the one hand and myth and allegory on the other, since the latter forms of discourse are both situated at the level of the text or narrative. Allegory, like metaphor, involves tension, but whereas in metaphor this tension is felt within the statement or proposition itself, with allegory it emerges only as the whole unit of discourse interacts with its wider context.¹⁸ Myth is often closely associated with metaphor, as will be explored in Chapter 2 in the context of Plato's myths about gods and the soul. However, it is clear that metaphor, as semantic impertinence and resolution at the level of the phrase, and myth, as extended narrative with its own specific features and markers, belong to quite separate categories of language use.

b) Image and Model

The term 'image' is used in at least two ways. First, it is a generic term for figures of speech and, alongside the related noun 'imagery', is used to denote the whole class of verbal comparisons. Silk (*Interaction in Poetic Imagery*, p. 5) clarifies his usage of 'imagery': 'By imagery I mean primarily metaphor, simile and the various forms of *comparatio*; the tropes and schemes, that is, based on analogy or similarity'. This is the first meaning of the term in the title of my book, since my theme will be not just Plato's *metaphors* but the whole class of verbal comparisons for the gods and the soul. Second, 'image' is used to refer to a range of non-linguistic phenomena: 'mental events and visual representations', as summed up by Soskice (p. 55). These phenomena belong to different areas of human experience, with mental events as an internal activity and visual representations as an external object. With regard to external representations, Ricoeur's rendering of 'image' as 'la présentation d'une pensée sous une forme sensible' (p. 82)¹⁹ would include representations in media other than the visual. However, very often 'image' is associated with visible appearance. The second main non-linguistic application of the term 'image' is to mental events, where images are an inner product of the act of comprehension as the mind works to retain a memory of a visible object or scene. Likewise, in the case of verbal imagery, this sense of 'image' as mental event represents the process and the product of imagination as it interprets the information of a metaphor so as to form a mental picture of the object or concept

¹⁷ See J.M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, p. 54 ff. While there are affinities between metaphor and the linguistic forms of model and analogy, there are also important distinctions, as will be discussed below.

¹⁸ See Ricoeur, *LMV*, pp. 218-20.

¹⁹ Czerny translates (p. 60), 'the presentation of a thought in a sensible or tangible form'.

presented. Thus the term 'image' can be used both for the verbal formulation 'god the father' and for the mental picture and understanding produced by this form of words. Therefore the second meaning of the term 'images' in my title is the mental pictures of gods and souls stimulated by Plato's words.

In discussions on scientific and theological method model and metaphor are often closely linked,²⁰ since metaphors are seen as able to suggest connections which can be developed, by means of analogical reasoning, into more precise models.²¹ The essential feature of a model is that it is a framework designed to develop understanding and, as such, involves a conscious decision to impose a particular structure on the concept or situation at issue. Like metaphor, a model requires the transfer of ideas and terms from one domain to another. Karl H. Pribram describes a model as 'a precise coupling of an organization of data to another mode of organization such as a mathematical formulation' (p. 97). For Pribram the distinction between metaphor and model comes down to precision and openness to testing: whereas a metaphor is vague, a model presents ideas in a more systematic and organized way (pp. 97-8).²² A model can be non-linguistic or linguistic and, when linguistic, can take various forms: metaphor, verbal comparison or even literal statement, for example, 'Let us consider light as a wave'. Soskice reflects on metaphor's role in establishing and developing models and carefully distinguishes the initial role of setting out the model's basic terms from that of the subsequent working-out of the model's implications. She names the type of metaphor that proposes a model 'theory-constitutive', borrowing the term from Richard Boyd,²³ and gives as an example 'the brain is a computer'. The second type of metaphor that develops from the model she names 'metaphorically constituted theory terms' or, more simply, 'metaphorical terms', and gives as examples 'neural programming', 'output' and 'feedback', all stemming from the computer model for the brain. The distinction between these two types of metaphor at work in a model is helpful, but there are certain drawbacks in Soskice's terminology.

²⁰ Black, *Models* and 'More about metaphor' (esp. pp. 29-30); Soskice, p. 101; Leary, 'Psyche's muse', p. 5; Kearns' account of models and metaphors (pp. 40-41) makes the useful point that Soskice's view on the relationship between model and metaphor is more helpful to the study of pre-twentieth century science and philosophy than Black's, which is more concerned with the particular conditions, methods and assumptions of twentieth-century science and speculation.

²¹ See e.g. Karl H. Pribram, 'From metaphors to models: the use of analogy in neuropsychology' (p. 79): 'Analogical reasoning in science typically begins with metaphors that are only loosely coupled to the data to be organized and ends ideally by furnishing precise models of the fit of those data to the type of organization suggested by the original metaphor'. For Pribram the scientist uses metaphors to gain initial insights which he can then explore (through analogical reasoning) in order to produce models which are 'more precise and testable' (p. 98).

²² Paul McReynolds follows this view that a model is more systematic than a metaphor when he observes (p. 137): 'The term "model", it seems to me, should be (and typically is) restricted to the more complex, deliberative attempts to construct predictive replicas (physical, conceptual, or mathematical) of given natural domains'.

²³ Richard Boyd, 'Metaphor and theory change'. Boyd's views will be discussed below in my section on the epistemic thesis.

First, Boyd's term 'theory-constitutive metaphor' refers not just to the initial metaphor that proposes a particular model but to *all* metaphors that are integral to the development and expression of a theory at its different stages. Second, 'metaphorically constituted theory-term' is somewhat unwieldy, while 'metaphorical term' is imprecise. In the light of these points and in order to broaden the discussion to include not only metaphors but other verbal images at work in models, I should prefer to recast Soskice's distinction by saying that in any particular model, whether proposed in the form of a metaphor, analogy or literal statement, certain words become the 'source' for other 'derived' terms which are to be understood with reference to the overall framework. Thus in the computer model for the brain, 'computer' is the source term for the derived metaphors of 'programming' and 'input'. Likewise, in Plato's theological discourse, the craftsman model for god has 'craftsman' as the source term for the derived metaphors of 'welding' and 'glueing' the universe in creation (*Timaeus*, 43a and 75d).

The final figures to be considered here are those which are purely linguistic and which are close relatives of metaphor: simile, metonymy, synecdoche and verbal analogy.

c) *Simile*

The closest relative of metaphor is simile, as both are founded on the process of assimilation and association by resemblance.²⁴ In grammatical terms simile provides an explicit term of comparison ('like' or 'as'), whereas metaphor has no such marker. Broadly speaking, opinion is divided on the relationship between the two figures, with some scholars arguing that the difference is merely one of grammatical form and others arguing that this very difference has important consequences in terms of function and effect.²⁵ Donald Davidson and David Cooper are among those who see a difference only of grammatical form between metaphor and simile,²⁶ whereas others view metaphor and simile as having important semantic differences. For Kittay (pp. 143-9) metaphor has a distinctive 'second-order' meaning or 'double semantic import' which simile and other forms of discourse do not share. This second-order meaning leads to the employment of unique cognitive processes in the act of interpretation. Ricoeur (*LMV*) explores the issue more fully, developing his own position in response to Aris-

²⁴ See Ricoeur, *LMV*, pp. 38 and 152 (= Czerny, pp. 26 and 118).

²⁵ For discussions see: Kittay, pp. 17-19, 31, 143, 152, 187-8, 191; Cooper, *Metaphor*, pp. 12-17, 55-58, 141-3, 152, 187-8, 191; Soskice, pp. 58-61; Searle, pp. 91-102; Sheppard, pp. 182-3; Davidson, pp. 253-7; Hester, pp. 23-5; Stanford, pp. 25ff; Richards, *Principles*, p. 235; Ortony, 'The role of similarity in similes and metaphors', pp. 342-56; G.A. Miller, pp. 357-400; Black, *Models*, pp. 35-7, and 'More about metaphor', pp. 30-1; McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, pp. 37-8, and Ricoeur, *LMV*, pp. 34-40; 49; 67; 114; 152-3; 222; 236-7; 242; 251; 312 (= Czerny, pp. 24-7; 34; 47; 109; 118-9; 174; 186; 190; 197; 248).

²⁶ Davidson, 'What metaphors mean', p. 211: 'metaphor and simile are merely two among endless devices that serve to alert us to aspects of the world by inviting us to make comparisons'. For this view, see also Cooper, *Metaphor*, p. 187.

totle's subordination of simile to metaphor, according to which metaphor is not an abbreviated simile but simile a weakened metaphor.²⁷ For Ricoeur the crucial difference between metaphor and simile is that whereas in the complex of words that makes up a metaphor some terms are taken literally and others figuratively, in simile (p. 242): 'aucun terme n'est pris au sens figuratif et . . . le parallélisme opère entre deux lignes de termes littéraires'.²⁸ Thus the presence of an explicit term of comparison ('like' or 'as') in the grammatical form of simile means that all the words are used literally and so there is no semantic impertinence or deviation requiring a resolution through change of meaning. Silk's discussion establishes the same point (p. 14): 'This characteristic of literal phraseology is precisely what distinguishes simile and all the schemes of explicit imagery from the trope metaphor'. Thus in terms of cognitive function, Ricoeur and others have maintained that in simile the presence of the comparative term reduces the impact of the figure so that whereas the semantic collision of metaphor causes surprise,²⁹ simile 'en quelque sorte, détend le dynamisme même de la comparaison dans l'expression du terme de comparaison' (p. 38).³⁰

While Ricoeur's analysis establishes significant differences between metaphor and simile, it is important to remember that there are various types of simile, with some offering a significant interpretative challenge. Soskice distinguishes 'illustrative' similes, which offer point-by-point comparisons and have restricted implications, from 'modelling' similes, which stretch the imagination and are capable of considerable development.³¹ In many passages in Plato such 'modelling' similes work alongside metaphors to form an integral part of the development of images and ideas.³² Given the interconnectedness of metaphor and simile in presenting particular images, the naive view of Plato's similes as 'un hors-d'oeuvre facilement détachable'³³ is unsatisfactory.

²⁷ Aristotle's discussion occurs at *Rhetoric* III 1406a20, b25-6, 1407a14-15, 1410b17-18, 1412b34-5, 1413a15-16; Ricoeur's interpretation at pp. 34-40 (= Czerny, pp. 24-7) and *passim*.

²⁸ Czerny translates, 'no term is taken in a figurative sense and . . . the parallelism operates between two sequences of literal terms' (p. 190).

²⁹ Ricoeur, *LMV*, pp. 38, 49, 67 (= Czerny, pp. 26, 34, 47).

³⁰ Czerny translates, 'somehow dissipates that dynamism of comparison by including the comparative term' (p. 26).

³¹ Soskice, pp. 58-61. Eva Kittay (pp. 17-9) also distinguishes simple and more complex similes, but her use of the terms 'literal' and 'figurative' for these types may be misleading, since similes strictly do not involve figurative usage but are always literal. Thus while similes do indeed inspire comparisons in thought across different categories, they do not themselves 'cross categorial boundaries' in grammar. I dispute Kittay's claim that the 'like' in certain similes is itself metaphorical and favour the view of Ricoeur and Silk that it is the very presence of 'like' that guarantees literalness.

³² Passages on the gods or the soul where metaphor and simile are active together include: *Phd.* 83d; *Phdr.* 254e; *Rep.* 401b, 561b, 614e, 621b; *Polit.* 272e; *Tim.* 69d, 73c, 73d, 77c-d, 78b; *Laws* 902e.

³³ Louis, p. 5.

d) Metonymy, Synecdoche and Catachresis

Metonymy is the trope in which 'one uses an adjunct to stand for the whole',³⁴ where, for example, Zeus is referred to as 'thunder' or 'Poseidon' as 'trident'.³⁵ Synecdoche, like metonymy, is based on an association by contiguity, but here 'one uses a species term to stand in for a genus, or a genus term for a species, or a more comprehensive term for a less and *vice versa*'.³⁶ An example of synecdoche is 'the ships opened fire' where 'ships' stands in for 'guns'. The crucial difference between metonymy and synecdoche on the one hand and metaphor on the other is that of semantic impertinence. For whereas metaphor is defined by the presence and resolution of deviation, 'le statut d'épithète impertinente, essentiel à la métaphore, n'est aucunement supposé par la synecdoque'.³⁷ Silk expresses the same idea through the concept of 'prominence'. In metaphor a vehicle has prominence because 'it stands out as terminologically alien' (p. 64). In contrast, 'Metonymic deviation from the norm, metonymic extraneousness, metonymic prominence are of a lower order altogether' (p. 64). Thus metonymy and synecdoche, although more 'prominent' than literal speech, do not disturb the reader or recipient with the same 'clash' as metaphor. It has been argued, in fact, that such a clash in metonymy, leading to new associations and a new perspective, would represent a 'failure in comprehension'.³⁸

For all their manifest differences, metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche share an important role in that they can all function as types of catachresis. Although Silk has shown that there are problems in defining catachresis as an independent trope (pp. 210-11), a useful definition embracing the functions of a number of tropes is offered by the French grammarian Fontanier: '*La catachrèse, en général, consiste en ce qu'un signe déjà affecté à une première idée, le soit aussi à une idée nouvelle qui elle-même n'en avait point ou n'en a plus d'autre en propre dans la langue.*'³⁹ More simply, and less restrictively, Soskice defines catachresis as 'the supplying of a term where one is lacking in the vocabulary' (p. 61). Whereas Fontanier's definition covers instances of catachresis through metaphorical transference and through extension by synecdoche and metonymy (whereby an established term is transferred to a 'second idea'), Soskice's definition also covers neologism. Even though the usage in all cases of catachresis is necessarily new, metaphorical transference will still provide a greater degree of deviation or prominence than extension by contiguity. For in the case of metonymy and synecdoche the new usage does not suggest a network of new associa-

³⁴ Soskice, p. 57.

³⁵ Silk, p. 65.

³⁶ Soskice, p. 57.

³⁷ Ricoeur, *LMV*, p. 212. Czerny translates (p. 165), 'The status of the impertinent epithet, essential to metaphor, is of no concern whatsoever to synecdoche'. See also *LMV*, p. 233.

³⁸ Soskice, pp. 57-8.

³⁹ P. Fontanier, p. 213, quoted by Ricoeur, p. 84. Czerny translates (p. 62), '*In general, catachresis refers to a situation in which a sign, already assigned to a first idea, is assigned also to a new idea, this latter having no sign at all or no other proper sign within the language.*'

tions (Soskice, p. 62) but rather 'fits into standard speech without imaginative strain' (p. 66).

e) *Analogy*

The exact nature and definition of analogy has given rise to a long and venerable tradition of speculation, from Aristotle to contemporary logic and theology *via* the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. G.E.R. Lloyd⁴⁰ observes that there has not been general agreement on the definition of analogy but sets out his own working account: 'Here I shall take "analogy" in its broadest sense, to refer not merely to proportional analogy (a:b::c:d)⁴¹ but to any mode of reasoning in which one object or complex of objects is likened or assimilated to another.' Lloyd regards analogy primarily as a mode of reasoning, and this marks out one of the key differences between analogy and metaphor as far as my study is concerned. For whereas metaphor will be taken to be a purely linguistic form, analogy is a term used for both a mode of reasoning and the consequent manner of expression. The question for this study then becomes: what is the difference between metaphor and linguistic analogy? Soskice again provides clear guidance (p. 64): 'Analogy as a linguistic device deals with language that has been stretched to fit new applications yet fits the new situation without generating for the native speaker any imaginative strain.' This point about 'imaginative strain' is crucial and echoes Soskice's earlier distinctions between metaphor and both metonymy and synecdoche. This 'strain' must be regarded as another attempt to express the same feature as Ricoeur's 'deviation' or Henle's 'clash' and is the distinctive aspect of metaphor which sets it apart from all other figures and tropes. Analogical language, in contrast, is an extension of standard usage which does not offer a significant interpretative challenge to the hearer (Soskice, p. 65): 'Analogical usage can be distinguished from a metaphorical usage by the fact that from its inception it seems appropriate. We feel no jolt or strain in saying "my dog is happy", "my dog is eager to go", . . . We regard such analogy as a legitimate extension of a word's domain of application.' Analogical language, then, is an extension of standard, literal usage and, as such, causes no strain or tension requiring resolution through the adoption of new perspectives. In theology critics have wrestled with the problem of how language based on human experience and knowledge can meaningfully refer to God, and it has been concluded that discourse on God, when it is not metaphorical, is at least analogical, with terms being extended from their standard human application to fit the divine nature. Thus, to speak of God as 'good' or 'wise' is to speak analogically.⁴² Soskice contrasts

⁴⁰ G.E.R. Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy* (= *PA*), p. 175.

⁴¹ For an excellent discussion of proportional analogy, see David Burrell, *Analogy and Philosophical Language*, ch. 1 'What analogy is and why', and ch. 2 'What analogy might be'.

⁴² This is St. Thomas Aquinas' influential view on the nature of language for God, a view which Swinburne rejects in favour of that of Duns Scotus, whereby the use of predicates such as 'good', 'wise' *etc.* are used not analogically of God but univocally of God and man (Swinburne, pp. 153-4).

such analogical language for God with speaking 'in a flagrantly pictorial or metaphorical way' (p. 66). This point deserves comment, for while speaking in a 'flagrantly pictorial' way may involve the use of imagery, it does not necessarily involve the use of metaphor. Consider the phrase, 'God, our loving father'. This suggests an image of God as a human parent and thus may be considered as 'pictorial', but is it a metaphor? It is clearly an extension of the standard usage of 'father' as a man who has, in union with a woman, created a child. But is this extension metaphorical? The determining factor according to the method outlined above is that of semantic deviation or clash. Does this phrase produce semantic deviation or imaginative strain, or is it so familiar that it has itself become part of standard usage and so cannot be classed as metaphor? The issue is addressed by Richard Swinburne as he sets out his own account of the distinction between metaphor and analogy, based on his distinctions between univocal, analogical and equivocal language. Against the background of varying interpretations of these traditional categories, Swinburne establishes his own usage (pp. 39-40):

I shall say that a word ' ϕ ' is used on two occasions in a univocal sense if it is used in the same sense, in an analogical sense if it is used in a similar sense, in an equivocal sense if it is used in an unrelated sense. [. . .] A word has the same sense if it has all the same synonyms, contraries, determinates, and so on; similar sense if it has many of the synonyms, and so on; unrelated sense if it has none of the same synonyms, and so on.

Therefore analogical usage occurs when a word is used in a similar sense in different contexts, and one important instance of analogy is when a word is removed from one context and applied in another (pp. 41-2). But, given that metaphor can also be regarded as a transfer of words from a familiar to an unfamiliar context, how then is metaphor to be distinguished from analogy? Swinburne's account of metaphor, in common with others set out above, rests on the principle of novel usage (p. 43): 'Metaphor arises when a word or words are not used in any pre-existing senses, nor in any new sense given an explicit definition, but where knowledge of a wide context . . . will reveal what is being said. The sense is a new one, generated by the context and by the previous established senses of the word together.' Swinburne concedes that according to his definition there is 'a wide, unclear border' (p. 48) between metaphor and analogy but, nevertheless, his analysis of the two figures in Christian creeds supports the central distinction between standard and novel usage. Swinburne argues that since God 'cannot be a "person" in quite the same sense' as a human being (p. 156), all language that presents God as a person cannot be univocal and so is analogical. He therefore takes as analogical all those words for God which imply bodily sensations or the use of bodily organs (such as feeling anger, p. 155). However, given that the use of physical and personal language for God requires some sort of extension of sense or meaning, why is it not to be classed as metaphorical? The answer is that the personifications in question are well established and so do not represent novel usage. However, distinguishing novel from established usage is far from straightforward, as Swinburne acknowledges (p. 151): 'It does however require some careful analysis to see when

words in theology are being used univocally, when they are being used analogically, and when they are being used metaphorically'. In each case 'detailed analysis' is required (p. 161). But even with detailed analysis, the issue can still resist clear-cut classification, as is apparent when Swinburne assesses the status of language of God as a 'father' (p. 158): 'Talk in all creeds of the first person of the Holy Trinity as "the Father" and of the second person as "the Son", . . . may also be classified as metaphorical; although this use of "Father" was perhaps sufficiently well established and clear in Jewish thought to be regarded as analogical.' Although often difficult to apply, this distinction between metaphor as novel transference and analogy as well-established extension of meaning is extremely useful. For it acknowledges that extensions and transfers of terms from one context to another can themselves become standard, but still insists that these are of quite a different order from metaphor, which — as on Ricoeur's analysis — necessarily creates fresh and novel applications causing surprise and offering a semantic challenge. Thus the task of distinguishing metaphors from analogies is that of determining and measuring the extent of deviation from standard usage, with analogies offering familiar proportional relationships (god:creation::father:child) and metaphors forcing new meanings through semantic clash.

The determining and measuring of deviation from standard linguistic usage is the crucial factor in identifying metaphors and in marking off metaphor from other tropes and figures. The determining of deviation is also the crucial factor in distinguishing metaphorical from literal language. In recent studies the metaphorical/literal distinction has been called into question and some critics have adopted the view that 'all language is metaphorical'. In the next section I shall argue that the literal/metaphorical distinction is fundamental, even in cases where it is difficult to reach hard and fast decisions on the status of terms — as with the literary products of an ancient language and culture.

2. Metaphors and Literal Language

In the preceding sections metaphor has been defined, following Ricoeur's account, in terms of the production and subsequent reduction of deviation. This deviation (*écart*) is the movement away from the normal or ordinary usage of terms, which for Ricoeur and others represents literal language. So, metaphor is defined against literal usage wherein words carry their ordinary, usual meanings.⁴³ In company with other critics, Mary Hesse⁴⁴ has rejected this account of metaphor as 'deviation' on the grounds that

⁴³ Silk, p. 27: 'Inasmuch as all imagery embodies the temporary displacement of the terminology "at issue" in favour of "extraneous" terminology, all imagery embodies a deviation from the terminological norm, albeit a familiar kind of deviation. Metaphor alone has the distinction of achieving this deviation through a simultaneous departure from the normal usage of the language as a whole.' See also p. 28 where Silk uses the term 'literal' simply to refer to usage which is normal and standard.

⁴⁴ Mary Hesse, 'The Cognitive claims of metaphor', pp. 27 ff.

it represents the metaphoric uses of words as 'in some way improper or deviant' (p. 27). Against this view, Hesse contends that metaphor is itself a standard form of language use (pp. 28-9):

The extensions of meaning that occur by means of similarities and differences in metaphor are only the more striking examples of something that is going on all the time in the changing and holistic network that constitutes language. In this sense metaphoric meaning is normal, not pathological, and some of the mechanism of metaphor is essential to the meaning of any descriptive language at all.

The final point here — that some of the mechanism of metaphor is essential in any descriptive language — is used to support Hesse's claim that 'all language is metaphorical' (p. 27).⁴⁵ However, as the article continues, Hesse herself re-establishes the necessary distinction between literal and metaphorical language, when she argues that (p. 29):

the literal/metaphoric distinction is properly a pragmatic, not a semantic use. That is to say, it concerns the way in which speakers learn, use, and if necessary define the words of their language. Literal use is most frequent use in familiar contexts — that use that least disturbs the network of meanings. Thus literal use is the easiest to manage, to learn and to teach . . . the use that is susceptible to ostensive definition and is therefore the one with direct physical application to the local and relatively stable 'natural kinds' by which we are surrounded in nature. [. . .] It is the use that is least open to misunderstanding and mistake . . . All of this is quite sufficient to explain why it is that the analysis of metaphor apparently has to start from 'literal' language already understood but it does not in the least imply that the semantic bases of the two sorts of expression are radically different.

The view that the literal/metaphorical distinction is a matter of pragmatic use does not necessarily conflict with the view of metaphor as deviation, as Ricoeur himself observes in his own discussion of literal language. He rejects the idea that words possess a 'proper' (i.e. primitive, natural, or original) meaning in themselves (p. 369), and argues that his account of deviation does not imply this (*LMV*, p. 369):

Nous avons certes admis que l'emploi métaphorique d'un mot peut toujours être opposé à son emploi littéral; mais littéral ne veut pas dire propre au sens d'originaire, mais simplement courant, 'usuel'; le sens littéral est celui qui est lexicalisé. Il n'est donc pas besoin d'une métaphysique du propre pour justifier la différence du littéral et du figuré; c'est l'emploi dans le discours, et non je ne

⁴⁵ Leary, 'Psyche's muse', acknowledges that this view 'is controversial, even though it is common' (p. 4). Leary accepts that there are distinctions between metaphorical and literal language (and thought) but argues that for his own thesis 'by and large they can be ignored' (p. 4). See also pp. 4-7 for his views on the relationship between metaphor and literal language.

sais quel prestige du primitif ou de l'originel, qui spécifie la différence du littéral et du métaphorique.⁴⁶

Thus literal use emerges simply as the standard or ordinary use of words, whereas metaphor, as deviation, is a movement away from this. Without literal usage, there could be no metaphor, for without a background of ordinary, standard meanings, there could be no clash or semantic impertinence — the very essence of metaphor. Thus, to claim that 'all language is metaphorical' is to destroy not just the literal/metaphorical distinction but the very possibility of metaphor. In contrast, to see the categories of metaphor and literal language as in permanent and necessary opposition is simply to recognise that (in Silk's words): '*In fine*, the contrast between normal and abnormal usage remains black and white' (p. 28). Against Hesse it must be maintained that recognising metaphor as an instance of abnormal usage or as 'deviant' from literal language does not consign it to the status of being a 'pathological' rarity. Rather, one must acknowledge that while in relation to *particular* instances of language use, metaphor is a deviation, in relation to language *in general* metaphor is a central and entirely 'normal' feature.⁴⁷ For the transgression of logical ordering that is at the heart of metaphor is one of the standard ways that language (and indeed thought) both works and evolves. The deviation in metaphorical usage is, then, 'abnormal' when viewed from the perspective of the use of a particular word, but entirely 'normal' when viewed against the processes of language at large.

'Literal' and 'metaphorical', therefore, are categories relating to two poles of language use, but neither of these categories is permanently fixed: some metaphors themselves become standard, normal usage and thus form the literal background from which new metaphors can emerge. Metaphors which become standardized or 'lexicalized'⁴⁸ in this way are often referred to as 'dead' metaphors. But the 'death' of these metaphors is not necessarily permanent, for, as critics have observed, there are various ways in which dead metaphors can be brought back to life. The essential point here is that there is a constant shifting between the categories of dead and live meta-

⁴⁶ Czerny translates (pp. 290-1), 'We did admit of course that the metaphorical use of a word could always be opposed to its literal use; but literal does not mean proper in the sense of originary, but simply current, "usual". The literal sense is the one that is lexicalized. There is thus no need for a metaphysics of the proper to justify the difference between literal and figurative. It is use in discourse that specifies the difference between the literal and metaphorical, and not some sort of prestige attributed to the primitive or the original.'

⁴⁷ Ricoeur (*LMV*) acknowledges that metaphor is a standard feature of language use (p. 191): 'la figure s'oppose aux manières communes et usuelles de parler; mais les figures ne sont pas toujours rares; bien plus, le discours le plus rare de tous serait le discours sans figure'. (Czerny, p. 149: 'Figure is opposed to the common and usual ways of speaking. But figures are not always rare; moreover, the most unusual of all discourses would be one devoid of figure.') The point that using metaphor is an entirely 'normal' aspect of speech was recognised by I.A. Richards (*Philosophy of Rhetoric*, p. 92) who observed that without metaphor 'we cannot get through three sentences of ordinary fluid discourse'. See also Leary, 'Psyche's muse', pp. 6-7.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur on dead/lexicalized metaphors: *LMV*, pp. 127, 207 and 368-73 (= Czerny, pp. 99, 161-2 and 289-94).

phors, that is between ordinary, literal usage and non-standard, metaphorical usage.⁴⁹ Given this dynamic relation between normal and abnormal language use, the task of identifying metaphors turns out to require a great deal of sensitivity. For one has to be familiar with the standard norms of a language to be able to recognise when there is a clash, impertinence, or imaginative strain and, conversely, when words are being used normally. As Silk discusses dead metaphors, he observes that to judge a usage as dead is to imply not only a historical but also an aesthetic statement, namely (p. 27), 'this word, used thus, feels and therefore is normal usage'. In the task of identifying literal and metaphorical terms, then, one's judgements are determined ultimately by whether a word 'feels and therefore is' normal or abnormal. But even in one's own language, there will be times when a particular usage cannot be definitively classed as metaphorical or literal, for current, standard usage is itself a slippery concept. Thus the task that faces the critic of ancient Greek metaphor seems daunting indeed.

In his ground-breaking study of Greek metaphor, Silk directly addresses the problem of identifying metaphors and offers a detailed procedure for how to assess the status of Greek literary terminology.⁵⁰ The essential criterion in evaluating normal and abnormal usage is that of 'distribution' which involves three particular considerations (p. 34): 'Under "distribution" are to be subsumed: (1) the quality of usage. In which authors and in which portions of their work is the word used thus? (2) The quantity of usage. How commonly is the word used thus? (3) The period of usage. *When* else is the word used thus?' Silk has provided a clear and precise method for those who undertake what emerges as a formidable task, requiring familiarity with a vast range of authors and styles. A work that determined the exact status of various forms of figurative language in Plato would be immensely useful, but sadly none exists. This means that as I analyse the philosophical role of verbal imagery in Plato, although I shall try to be sensitive to the norms of the Greek language, citing evidence of 'distribution' wherever possible, I must accept the limited nature of this enquiry and so be content with rather cautious judgements about what constitutes literal and metaphorical language for the gods and the soul in Plato. However, at the very least I shall comment on those verbal comparisons which are well established and those which appear to be novel. Swinburne's distinction between 'analogical' (standard) and 'metaphorical' (novel) comparisons will prove useful in this endeavour.

A final point on identifying metaphors is demanded by Plato's own literary technique. For one of the fundamental features of Plato's style of writing philosophy is the exploration of language itself, entailing analysis of established forms of expression. Often Plato will take a familiar idea, expressed in what would seem to be a fairly standard way, and then will scrutinise it from different angles until it begins to seem utterly alien. In the course of this analysis — this taking apart — of an idea, words will un-

⁴⁹ Leary, 'Psyche's muse' (p. 6), observes that there is 'continual commerce between these two poles' and that 'this contention about the permeable boundaries between the metaphorical and literal is hardly new' (p. 7).

⁵⁰ Silk, chapter 2, 'Dead metaphor and normal usage', pp. 27 ff.

dergo a shift of meaning, settled connotations will be unsettled and dead metaphors will be brought back to life. Ricoeur has commented on the techniques that writers employ to reanimate dead metaphors and has observed that the use of false etymology to this end is one of Plato's own favourite devices (*LMV*, p. 370). The movement from established to novel usage of words is intrinsic to Plato's style, and even where the starting point is a familiar image or comparison, the established form of expression can soon give way to strikingly novel usage and live metaphors. Thus the relationship between literal and metaphorical in Plato would seem to be significantly dynamic.

In this section I have endeavoured to define the nature of metaphor as against other tropes and figures in order to provide a clear terminology for use in the discussion ahead and to address some of the fundamental issues pertinent to a study of Greek metaphor. With these definitions of metaphorical and other figurative language in place, the next step is to explore the various claims that have been made about the cognitive roles of such language, in order to set the framework for an analysis of the philosophical significance of Plato's metaphors and images.

III. Metaphor's Cognitive Role

As a result of intense interest in recent years, metaphor is now well established as a figure of prime importance in both literary and ordinary language. Debate, once centred on the poetic or rhetorical potential of metaphor, has now shifted to metaphor's key role in developing understanding and shaping experience. The contribution of metaphor in disciplines such as physics, sociology, theology and psychology is currently receiving much critical attention. From a wide range of positions and opinions on the cognitive role of metaphor three basic views emerge, which can be termed the 'epistemic', the 'nonpropositional' and the 'illustrative' theses.⁵¹ The essential points of these theses, and their application in the particular areas of theology and psychology, will now be considered.

1. The Epistemic Thesis

On this view metaphor plays a unique role in cognition, as its distinctive expressive and cognitive capacities provide a special kind of epistemic access which other forms of discourse cannot provide. This view stems from the 'interaction' theory of metaphor

⁵¹ Johnson's analysis of the most influential types of metaphor theory (*The Body in the Mind*, pp. 67-72) produces three categories which are in line with my own. While the term 'nonpropositional' is established in the field of metaphor, Johnson collects other theories together under the headings 'Literal-core theories' and 'Metaphorical proposition theories'. These headings correspond respectively to my 'illustrative' and 'epistemic' views. In his assessment of the role of metaphor in motivational psychology, McReynolds identifies three functions of metaphor: descriptive, persuasive and creative (pp. 161-2). The descriptive and persuasive functions of metaphor are covered by my 'illustrative' thesis, while the creative function corresponds to the role of metaphor identified by the 'epistemic' thesis.

first proposed in a seminal work by I.A. Richards (*The Philosophy of Rhetoric*) and later developed by Max Black.⁵² The essence of the interaction theory is that the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor affect each other, since the principal subject is seen in terms of the secondary, and that as a result of this 'interaction', new meaning arises. The new meaning created by the interaction results from the restructuring of one concept in terms of another. Metaphor thus becomes a way of organising a concept.⁵³ In this act of organisation, the metaphor does not simply express the perception of previously existing similarities between tenor and vehicle, but actually creates the similarity. Thus metaphor does not simply present an underlying and familiar analogy or similarity⁵⁴ but rather suggests a resemblance not hitherto perceived. By creating resemblances in this way the metaphor provokes new insights which in turn change our conceptual systems. In 'More about metaphor', Black presents his view that metaphors generate insight in an 'irreplaceable' way (p. 21). He sets out his central proposition as follows (p. 35): 'Indeed, I intend to defend the implausible contention that a metaphorical statement can sometimes generate new knowledge and insight by *changing* relationships between the things designated (the principal and subsidiary subjects).' Further, the interactive nature of metaphor offers a unique means of expression since 'metaphorical thought and utterance sometimes embody insight expressible in no other fashion' (p. 33). Since metaphor has its own distinctive force, it is able to offer, through interaction, more than literal language. Black's attribution of special cognitive power to metaphor stems from a particular view of knowledge and reality. Metaphors do not simply give insight into external reality but rather create perspectives and perceptions which are themselves to be understood as new aspects of reality (pp. 38-9). Thus the epistemic access afforded by metaphor is access to new perspectives and new realities which the metaphor itself produces. Metaphor is thus cognitively irreplaceable because it generates knowledge in a unique way, namely by creating aspects of reality.

Black avoids the idea of external, objective reality and is reluctant to assign truth or falsity to a metaphor,⁵⁵ but sees metaphor's cognitive role as active and effective within the context of a particular perspective of reality.⁵⁶ It is in this context that meta-

⁵² *Models* (1962) and 'More about metaphor' (first published 1979).

⁵³ See Black, *Models*, p. 44: 'the metaphor selects, emphasises, suppresses and organises features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject'.

⁵⁴ A view often called the 'comparison' view. See e.g. Black, *Models*, pp. 35-7.

⁵⁵ Although Black is happy to talk about metaphors creating reality, he does not wish to attribute the term 'truth' to such reality. He likens metaphors to representational devices such as 'Charts and maps, graphs and pictorial diagrams' and comments ('More about metaphor', p. 39): 'In such cases we speak of correctness and incorrectness, without needing to rely upon those overworked epithets, "true" and "false."'.

⁵⁶ The view that the world is necessarily seen from a certain perspective and that metaphors can create such perspectives is developed further in the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*). For these critics metaphors are devices for understanding and are particularly effective in the areas of moral, emotional, aesthetic and spiritual experience. One of their central claims is that such experiences have no clearly delineated structure and that metaphors alone are responsible for establishing the only, if inadequate,

phor achieves its unique force. For, Black argues, metaphors which survive a particular type of critical examination 'can properly be held to convey, in indispensable fashion, insight into the systems to which they refer. In this way, they can, and sometimes do, generate insight about "how things are" in reality' ('More about metaphor', p. 39).

A stronger version of this view is proposed by Boyd who has applied the interactive view of metaphor to the context of theory change in science. Boyd tackles the issue of objective reality more directly and is willing to claim that in particular scientific circumstances metaphors may represent not just hypotheses but actual truths about external reality (p. 519):

If the articulation and refinement of a body of metaphors all involving the same metaphorical theme proves to be genuinely fruitful in scientific theory construction, then the only epistemologically plausible explanation is that most of the relevant metaphorical expressions refer, and that the metaphorical statements in question . . . express important truths.

However, these are special circumstances and for general cases Boyd simply makes the claim that certain types of metaphor are important in the setting out and exploration of hypotheses, allowing scientists to provide a 'tentative and preliminary account of the properties of presumed kinds' (p. 496). Through such scientific metaphors the reader 'is invited to explore the similarities and analogies between features of the primary and secondary subjects, including features not yet discovered, or not yet fully understood' (p. 489).

Kittay has developed a more detailed version of the interactionist approach and has offered an important qualification for the view that metaphor generates new knowledge about reality in a unique way. For Kittay metaphor structures or restructures a given concept by applying terms from one linguistic domain to other domains. She names her theory 'perspectival' and explains (p. 14):

To call our theory perspectival is to name it for the function metaphor serves: to provide a perspective from which to gain an understanding of that which is metaphorically portrayed. This is a distinctively cognitive role . . . the speaker makes use of one linguistically articulated domain to gain an understanding of another experiential or conceptual domain and similarly, it is the means by which a hearer grasps such an understanding.

The (re)structuring process offers a new perspective on the given concept, and the adjustment to the new view is termed a 'reconceptualisation' or a 'perspectival shift' (p. 301). Kittay argues that this shift generates new meanings and provides insights and information that have not previously been 'encoded' or 'digitalised' (p. 138). However, she is extremely careful to clarify the particular type of new information that

structure these experiences have. Thus metaphor has a special role in providing (partial) understanding of certain fundamental aspects of our human experience.

metaphor can express. For while Black maintains that metaphors can generate radically new knowledge, Kittay's claim is more modest. For she holds that metaphor works cognitively by ordering and reordering both information and conceptual relations that are already familiar to us (p. 39):

The cognitive force of metaphor comes, not from providing new information about the world, rather from a (re)conceptualisation of information that is already available to us. Information which is not articulated and conceptualised is of little cognitive importance. [. . .] Metaphor is a primary way in which we accommodate and assimilate information and experience to our conceptual organisation of the world. [. . .] In the process of accommodation and assimilation through metaphor, we gain a needed epistemic access to the metaphorical referent.

As she considers the issue of new discoveries about reality, Kittay reiterates the point that metaphor does not provide new knowledge of unknown features of our world (p. 302): 'Metaphor achieves its cognitive aims not by positing new existents, but by forcing a reconceptualisation of what is already given.'⁵⁷ Thus her conclusion remains that metaphor is primarily a device for offering new perspectives on information and ideas we already have (p. 313): 'The role of metaphor is not to tell us of something new, but of something new about what we already know.'

The second distinctive feature of the epistemic view is that metaphor has a special cognitive force over and above that of literal language. It offers a direct challenge to what is often called the 'substitution view' whereby a metaphor is regarded simply as a replacement for an equivalent literal statement.⁵⁸ Against this, it is held that metaphor has its own unique expressive powers and is able to communicate ideas in a different way from literal speech. One of the distinctive capacities of metaphor is the ability to introduce new terminology by extending established meanings of words, as Black asserts (*Models*, p. 31): 'Metaphor plugs the gaps in the literal vocabulary . . . metaphor is a species of catachresis. Catachresis is the putting of new senses into words.' The point that metaphor has quite different capacities from literal language has been developed both by Kittay and Boyd. For Kittay metaphor is able, through the act of reconceptualisation, to offer an epistemic access not afforded by other language (pp. 313-4):

⁵⁷ Further, although she does allow for the possibility of metaphor generating new discoveries in certain circumstances, she is quick to qualify the point (p. 313): 'In the process of the (re)description we may be guided to discover some new object or phenomenon. In that case, metaphor serves as a generator of new hypotheses. But we have to know our way around the subject matter to know which sort of hypotheses generated by a metaphor are worthy to pursue and which are not'.

⁵⁸ See e.g. Black, *Models*, p. 31 and esp. p. 37: 'Metaphorical statement is not a substitute for a formal comparison or any other kind of literal statement, but has its own distinctive capacities and achievements.'

The shift to a distinct semantic field . . . provides epistemic access to the referent not otherwise available . . . The detour through a semantic field that normally applies to another domain is the distinct metaphorical move to reconceptualisation. It is such a reconceptualisation that makes metaphor, when it is cognitively significant, irreducibly so.

The key terms here are 'not otherwise available' and 'irreducibly', for metaphor's expressive capacities, derived from its stimulation of the 'perspectival shift', outstrip those of literal language. On Kittay's view the metaphoric process achieves a restructuring and reordering of a given concept by which 'indefinitely many interpretations are made possible' (p. 301). It is precisely because of these different interpretative possibilities that the meaning of metaphor cannot be captured or paraphrased in literal terms. Thus metaphors can be both linguistically and cognitively irreducible and thereby irreplaceable (p. 301):

[The metaphor] receives the cognitive content through a perspectival move captured in the reordering of one content domain in accordance with the relations governing another semantic field. To the extent that the speaker has no other linguistic resources to achieve these ends, the metaphor is cognitively irreplaceable.

Therefore, through the process of reconceptualisation metaphor achieves a unique and irreducible cognitive force, providing a special kind of epistemic access which literal language cannot provide.

Boyd shares the view that metaphor opens up a range of interpretative possibilities and argues that the special role of metaphor in scientific theory change results from this open-endedness, which allows general claims to be made without specific details (p. 482):⁵⁹

There exists an important class of metaphors which play a role in the development and articulation of theories in relatively mature sciences . . . in particular, their success does not depend on their conveying quite specific respects of similarity or analogy. Indeed, their users are typically unable to precisely specify the relevant respects of similarity or analogy, and the utility of these metaphors in theory change crucially depends upon this open-endedness.

Boyd names this type of metaphor 'theory-constitutive' and argues that its function is 'a sort of *catachresis*', that is, such metaphors 'are used to introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed' (p. 482). Such theory-constitutive metaphors, therefore, allow the scientist to go beyond the constraints of established, literal usage and to develop new theoretical terminology. Further, since these metaphors actually constitute the theories they present, they are far more than mere exegetical or pedagogical devices, simply working to illuminate theories that can be set out in other

⁵⁹ Thomas Kuhn accepts this point, see 'Metaphor in science', pp. 533-4.

terms. For, once in action, the particular terminology provided by these metaphors determines the theory in question, and thus a change in metaphor is a change in theory. Since, for Boyd, certain theories depend entirely on the use of particular metaphors, those metaphors are linguistically and cognitively irreplaceable. Thus Boyd's central claim is that metaphors can introduce new scientific theories in a unique way, by expressing claims for which there are no adequate literal paraphrases.

The essence of the epistemic thesis, then, can be set out as follows:

(1) through interaction metaphors are able to convey insight into reality in an indispensable fashion;

and

(2) the cognitive content of interactive metaphors cannot be reduced to or replaced by literal terms.

2. The Nonpropositional Thesis

This thesis rejects the theory of interaction and its claim that metaphors have a special cognitive content. Critics who hold this view maintain instead that metaphors convey insight and understanding that is not propositional in character and that metaphor is not to be regarded primarily as an information-giving device. Donald Davidson challenges the notion that a metaphor carries a message (p. 261) and that its primary role is to relay information (p. 246): 'The concept of metaphor as primarily a vehicle for conveying ideas, even if unusual ones, seems to me as wrong as the parent idea that a metaphor has a special meaning.'⁶⁰ Davidson's view, however, is not a return to the substitution or ornamental view of metaphor,⁶¹ for he acknowledges that metaphor plays an important role in stimulating ideas. His main point is that metaphor's cognitive importance lies in its capacity to prompt or inspire certain ways of thinking rather than to deliver propositional information (Davidson, p. 263): 'there is no limit to what a metaphor calls to our attention, and much of what we are caused to notice is not propositional in character.' David Cooper (*Metaphor*) supports Davidson's rejection of the notion of privileged metaphorical meanings (see e.g. p. 90) and argues that the consequence of Davidson's account is (p. 108) 'that metaphor *etc.* is to be taken out of the orbit occupied by the information-giving devices of language and brought into, or close to, the one occupied by songs, poems, myths, allegories, and the like'. The common feature of these different verbal art-forms is that they are not primarily designed

⁶⁰ Davidson's position on the meaning of metaphor is strikingly at odds with the interactionist view (p. 245): 'This paper is concerned with what metaphors mean, and its thesis is that metaphors mean what the words, in their most literal interpretation, mean, and nothing more.'

⁶¹ For a summary of the substitution view, see Black (*Models*, pp. 31 ff.), and on the ornamental view, see Hawkes, *Metaphor*, pp. 27-31 and Lakoff and Johnson, pp. 190-1.

to convey propositional truths.⁶² Cooper has clarified this point further by comparing metaphors with paintings which stimulate certain responses but do not state propositions.⁶³ This approach leads to the conclusion that metaphor has a poetic rather than a scientific or didactic function. The main reason for this is that since metaphors are open to different interpretations (pp. 240–4), they cannot offer a straightforward, reliable delivery of any particular proposition. Rather, the cognitive significance of metaphor lies in its power to inspire ‘lines of imaginative thinking’ (p. 250). Kittay too maintains that metaphors offer unlimited interpretative possibilities,⁶⁴ but does not regard this as prohibiting the transfer of information. Cooper, following Davidson, challenges the idea that metaphor can offer a cognitive content beyond that of literal language and carries on the debate concerning metaphorical truth — a notion carefully avoided by Kittay. Thus he voices opposition to the idea that metaphor is a vehicle for a special kind of truth — for truths that cannot be conveyed adequately or perhaps not at all by ‘ordinary’ terms (pp. 216–38). He criticises the work of contemporary critics such as Roland Barthes and Paul Ricoeur (pp. 221–3), for he finds in their works a basic inconsistency: first they claim that ‘mimetic’ metaphors (which present things ‘as they truly are’) convey truths in a way that literal language cannot, but then go on to provide quite literal accounts of what those metaphors are trying to say. For Cooper the only way for ‘special’ metaphorical truth to avoid this paradox is according to a Heideggerian account of truth as the “disclosure” of information which is not propositionally specifiable’ (see *Metaphor*, pp. 238 and 251–7).

For Cooper, then, as for Davidson, metaphor emerges not as a device designed to convey information but rather, in the manner of a work of art, to stimulate lines of thought, prompt imagery and imaginative speculation, to convey attitudes and to evoke emotional response.⁶⁵

⁶² Christopher Janaway in his illuminating treatment of Plato’s critique of the arts, *Images of Excellence*, considers the idea that art makes a contribution to our knowledge and offers the helpful observation (pp. 197–8): ‘It seems unlikely that there is [a] class of true propositions which only artworks can put us in touch with — artworks could be at best the most effective means of coming to know them. But there is a further difficulty here: if we ask which propositional truths a particular drama or novel teaches us, answers tend to be either banal or implausible. Even supposing that we manage to cull some useful piece of wisdom . . . we ought to wonder whether the dramatist could not have conveyed that proposition in less labour-intensive fashion. The conclusion should be, not that there is nothing to learn from drama, but that not all learning is the mastery of propositions’. For the same point see also J. Stolnitz, ‘On the cognitive triviality of art’. These comments on art offer a useful parallel for Davidson’s and Cooper’s claims about the nonpropositional nature of metaphor’s cognitive content.

⁶³ ‘Interesting metaphors should be compared not to statements, but to paintings. They can do a great deal for us, but not by stating a particular proposition.’ Quotation from lectures on metaphor given by Professor D. Cooper at the University of Durham, 1988.

⁶⁴ Kittay p. 301, ‘by the reordering of the topic domain, indefinitely many interpretations are made possible’.

⁶⁵ Swinburne acknowledges the point that metaphor can have a more emotive than didactic role (p. 49): ‘Even if a writer is trying to convey a belief, the way he does it, the style of his writing, may be at least of equal importance to him. In that case the role of metaphor is

3. *The Illustrative Thesis*

On this view metaphor enjoys special rhetorical and exegetical powers and can play an important role in teaching and in the development of new ideas and theories. Metaphor is regarded as a useful illustrative device, able to express information concisely and memorably. Its most distinctive cognitive role lies in its capacity to guide thought from a more familiar to a less familiar, or an entirely new, domain of reference. Since the illustrative thesis highlights metaphor's rhetorical power, it is not surprising that it should accept the nonpropositional claim that metaphor has a special capacity for evoking moods and feelings, conveying attitudes and stimulating lines of thought. However, since it views metaphor as a useful exegetical device, clearly it cannot support the central nonpropositional claim that it is a mistake to regard metaphor as having a distinct cognitive content or as designed primarily as a means of carrying a message. Equally there is some common ground between the illustrative and the epistemic theses, since both maintain that metaphor can be an effective pedagogic and heuristic tool. However, the illustrative thesis rejects the central epistemic claims that metaphors have an irreducible cognitive content and are able to generate insight and express ideas in a way that goes beyond the powers of literal discourse. Critics who hold the illustrative thesis dispute the claim that metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable and argue that any insight that can be conveyed by metaphor can be analysed and translated into literal terms. Thus whereas on the illustrative thesis no metaphor is cognitively and linguistically irreplaceable and metaphor's cognitive significance comes only from its powers as an exegetical or pedagogical device, the epistemic thesis argues that different metaphors can have different cognitive roles — with epistemic metaphors conveying new insights and actually constituting theories and with illustrative metaphors performing a more supportive, exegetical role. Thus Boyd is able to distinguish those metaphors in science which are epistemic or theory-constitutive and those which play a pedagogical or illustrative role.⁶⁶ Although more interested in the former, Boyd recognises the value of pedagogical metaphors and offers useful comments on their nature and function (p. 485): 'Certain metaphors, which might be plausibly termed exegetical or pedagogical metaphors, play a role in the teaching or explication of theories which already admit of entirely adequate nonmetaphorical (or, at any

more to stimulate imagination than to convey truth — as far as expressing the statement is concerned, the job might be done equally well by a non-metaphorical sentence'. However, Swinburne does not accept that this is the only role that a metaphor can have, as will be seen below.

⁶⁶ Hugh G. Petric and Rebecca S. Oshlag, 'Metaphor and learning', also acknowledge both the illustrative and epistemic functions of metaphor (p. 589): 'Thus the educational functions we are proposing for metaphor are that it does, indeed, make learning more memorable, and that it does, indeed, help move one from the more familiar to the less familiar. But we are also claiming that metaphor is what enables one to pass from the more familiar to the unfamiliar in the sense that it provides a key mechanism for changing our modes of representing the world in thought and language.'

rate, less metaphorical) formulations.' His examples of such exegetical metaphors include the term 'electron cloud' and the reference to atoms as 'miniature solar systems'. He then comments on the significance of this type of metaphor in theory change (p. 486):

The fact that these metaphors, and others like them, do not convey theoretical insights not otherwise expressible does not indicate that they play no important role in theory change. Kuhn's work⁶⁷ has made it clear that the establishment of a fundamentally new theoretical perspective is a matter of persuasion, recruitment and indoctrination. It cannot be irrelevant to those enterprises that there is a body of exegetically, or pedagogically, effective metaphors.

However, whereas critics such as Boyd acknowledge these two cognitive roles of metaphor, others argue that while metaphors have significant illustrative power they are never cognitively and linguistically irreplaceable. Thus on the illustrative thesis metaphor provides a highly effective method of conveying ideas which nevertheless can be expressed — albeit with less impact — in literal terms. The central claims of the epistemic thesis have been attacked by critics who acknowledge the illustrative powers of metaphor.

First Boyd's view that metaphors provide special cognitive access in science has been criticised on the grounds that it fails to make a necessary distinction between the scientific aims of illuminating a new phenomenon and establishing a valid theoretical principle. One of the challenges to the epistemic view is that while metaphors can indeed offer new and helpful perspectives in science and theory-building, they are ultimately dangerous because they are unable to offer satisfactory explanations or arguments. For example, Z.W. Pylyshyn⁶⁸ maintains that in certain scientific contexts metaphors can be not only unproductive but also misleading (p. 553):

any metaphor which leaves one feeling that a phenomenon has been 'explained,' even though only a superficial level of functional reduction or process explanation has been offered, is, to my mind . . . , unproductive. [. . .] It is, in my view, particularly serious in those cases where the metaphor makes prediction possible without affording explanation.

On this argument the ultimate deficiency of such accounts lies not in the fact that they involve metaphor, but that they come to rest on it. For if an account depends ultimately on metaphor, it provides merely the illusion of explanation.

The epistemic claim that metaphor allows a special kind of cognitive access has also been challenged from the standpoint of the use of metaphor in education. Against the claim that metaphor is epistemologically necessary, it has been argued that new knowledge can be attained quite independently of metaphor and can be explained in

⁶⁷ T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

⁶⁸ 'Metaphorical imprecision and the "top-down" research strategy'.

terms of traditional concepts of argument and inference.⁶⁹ For while the interaction theorists regard metaphor as able to trigger a unique type of thought-process, others argue that such processes can be stimulated also by means such as the exercise of imagination or the consideration of different perspectives. Thomas F. Green has asserted (pp. 619-20): 'Learning something radically new is quite understandable — as understandable as it can be — without the introduction of metaphor at all. Metaphors are nice; sometimes they are needed; oftentimes they are useful; but epistemologically necessary they are not.' In opposition to the epistemic thesis Green maintains what he calls the 'familiar' view of metaphor's cognitive role, namely (pp. 613-4), 'that the function of metaphor in education is to make memorable, in a compact expression, what we have learned through literal, but more extended, language. This is the view that metaphor is a mnemonic or heuristic device. And surely, that is sometimes true'. Thus Green adheres to the view I have termed illustrative, but at the end of his account he offers a tantalising comment that would seem, for all his denials, to leave open the possibility of metaphors achieving the irreplaceability argued for on the epistemic thesis (p. 620): 'If there is any setting in which metaphors come closest to being absolutely indispensable, it would be, I believe, in those settings where they are used by religious teachers. But that is another topic entirely.' Since the area in which I shall test the various theories of metaphor is Plato's accounts of gods and souls, an analysis of this other topic is very much to my purpose. The next step, then, is to examine contemporary views of metaphor's role in religious and theological discourse and to show how these share important affinities with two of the theses already discussed.

IV. Metaphors in Theology

Theologians in recent times have paid considerable attention to the role of metaphor in theological discourse and speculation. Although the debate about theological metaphors is situated in the Christian tradition, nevertheless it is concerned with the issue of using metaphor to speak about divine nature in general as well as the specific instance of the Judaeo-Christian God.⁷⁰ Thus while contemporary theologians may be working with a concept of God that is very different from the gods found in Plato, still their views on discourse about divinity are relevant for the study of Plato's gods. Before specific views on theological metaphors are examined, it will be helpful to establish some points relating to theological language *per se*, since this type of discourse poses special problems regarding the identification of literal and metaphorical terminology.

⁶⁹ Thomas F. Green, 'Learning without metaphor'.

⁷⁰ Since my concern throughout is with divine nature rather than the Judaeo-Christian God, I shall in general use the plural 'gods'. Where the divine nature is spoken of as singular, however, I shall use 'God' on the understanding that this is not thereby a reference to the Christian God (unless specified).

1. Talking about Gods

It is often said that all language about divine nature is metaphorical, fictional or non-sensical. Since accounts of theological metaphors can be confused by a tendency to cross these different categories, it is important at the outset to disentangle the various strands of thought represented in such claims. The view that language about 'God' is by its very nature non-sensical was endorsed by the logical positivists and has been succinctly stated by A.J. Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic* (pp. 117-8): 'the religious utterances of the theist are not genuine propositions at all . . . there cannot be any transcendent truths of religion. For the sentences which the theist uses to express such "truths" are not literally significant'. Such sentences are not regarded as significant because, it is claimed, human language can relate meaningfully only to human experience. As Ayer explains (p. 118): 'to say that something transcends the human understanding is to say that it is unintelligible. And what is unintelligible cannot be significantly described'. If the 'mystic' accepts that 'God' cannot be described, then, Ayer argues, he must admit 'that he is bound to talk nonsense when he describes it' (p. 118). Ayer comments on the widespread use of personification in religion and maintains that language used of persons is not legitimately transferable to 'God', for 'the notion of a person whose essential attributes are non-empirical is not an intelligible notion at all' (p. 116). Similarly, Bernard Williams⁷¹ has pointed out that theological language will necessarily result in 'a sort of inherent and necessary incomprehensibility' (p. 187), since, in any talk of God, human language is being extended to cover a quite different type of entity. Although many would argue that this extension of language can be rendered meaningful through the positing of some sort of relation between the supernatural and the natural world, Williams maintains that such relations have no explanatory validity (p. 204):

The statement of these relations will be itself unsatisfactory, and will involve others that are so: because the concepts required — of fatherhood, for instance, and of love, and of power — are acquired in a human context; the language of these things is a language that grows and is used for the relations of humans to humans. To say that, while this is so, religious language requires merely an extrapolation from the human context, is not to solve the problem but to pose it again. For the extrapolation required is an extrapolation to infinity, and in even trying to give a sense to this we encounter the incomprehensibility.⁷²

It is an obvious point that in talking of gods human beings necessarily use language from human experience. But views differ as to the status of this language. While for

⁷¹ Bernard Williams, 'Tertullian's paradox'.

⁷² More recently, Swinburne has made the same point in discussion of G.J. Hughes, 'Aquinas and the limits of agnosticism' (*Revelation*, p. 153): 'while argument leads us to use such predicates as "good" of God and thus to affirm a resemblance between a divine property and human goodness, "we are unable to state in what this resemblance consists. It "transcends our mode of expression" because God transcends our way of existing", "we do not have a grasp of the truth conditions" for applying such description to God'.

the logical positivist such theological language is meaningless, theists have developed various strategies to argue that although our language is inevitably bound by human experience, it can still meaningfully be used of divine, transcendent nature. One of the key aspects of such arguments is the validity of using metaphorical language for divine nature.

2. Metaphors for Gods

The transference of terms from one linguistic or experiential domain to another has been identified as either metaphorical or analogical (depending on the level of novelty or deviation from standard terms), and thus the transference of human terminology to gods has been readily identified as an instance of metaphor and analogy. As human beings transfer terms from their own experience onto divine nature, the most prevalent type of metaphor or analogy is that of personification.⁷³ Given this widespread use of personifying metaphors and analogies for God, the issue before us is whether all theological discourse is necessarily analogical or metaphorical. For if so, then already the case is made that figurative language plays an irreplaceable role in any discourse on divinity.

Swinburne observes that metaphor is to be expected in theology because it must use ordinary mundane words as it attempts to speak of transcendent matters (p. 150).⁷⁴ However, he does not accept that all such usages are analogical or metaphorical on the grounds that 'it is possible for ordinary words to be applied in quite new circumstances without being used analogically or metaphorically'. He illustrates this with the example of a ball being said to have a diameter of 1 metre, a galaxy a diameter of 300,000 light years and an atomic nucleus a diameter of 10^{-14} . In all cases although the diameters are very different, the word 'diameter' is used in exactly the same sense (p. 151). Thus, on Swinburne's terms, the usage of 'diameter' in all three contexts is univocal, and any such univocal extension of a literal term will itself be literal. Thus, in the attempt to describe the nature of theological language, the issue becomes whether the extension of terms from human experience to the transcendental is to be categorised as univocal, analogical or metaphorical: univocal language would be a literal extension or application of established terms; analogical language would be human terms applied to gods in a proportional relation, with all the terms being used in an established sense

⁷³ Swinburne makes the point succinctly (p. 156): 'Clearly theology, in talking of God as "good" and "wise" . . . is using a whole system of person predicates. It is using the model of a person for its thought about God, in the way that science uses the model of a wave for its thought about light'.

⁷⁴ A similar point is made earlier in the book, as Swinburne comments on the necessary gap between the practical language of everyday experience and the abstract or transcendent subjects which humans endeavour to discuss (p. 50): 'the words which humans have most readily available to them are words whose meaning is learnt from their primary use in connection with fairly down-to-earth human activities. Such words may not be immediately suitable for talk about abstract philosophical concepts, subatomic entities, infinite space and time, or God'.

(e.g. god:human::father:child); and metaphorical language would be a novel usage forcing a new interpretation of terms. Following Swinburne's account, then, the pertinent question for this study becomes: is there any language for gods that can be classed as univocal with literal terms used for human experience? Or, put more simply: is there any literal language for divinity? Some theologians (for example, Swinburne) argue that there is, but are at pains to point out that identifying such language is not always straightforward or a matter of agreement. This point is extremely important with regard not only to theological discourse but also to psychological accounts. One of the main conclusions of this study will be that judgements regarding the particular status of literal and non-literal terms in Plato's theological and psychological discourse are by no means straightforward, but require great care and sensitivity to norms of language, to context and to individual usage.

In this exploration of Plato's metaphors my method will be to preserve as far as possible the conservative view that metaphors can always be replaced by literal terms. In this way I hope to mount as rigorous as possible an assault on the epistemic thesis to see if it can withstand all challengers. To this end, although it is a vexed issue, I shall follow the view of Swinburne and other theologians that it is possible to speak about God in literal terms. For these critics such literal language can be defined as the use of terms for divinity which carry the same sense as in their use of human beings or of other natural phenomena. When a verbal formulation attributes to God human or physical characteristics which cannot be understood in their literal sense (for example, physical embodiment), the extension of language is (a) *analogical* when the usage is standard and (b) *metaphorical* when it is novel. With these distinctions between literal, analogical and metaphorical discourse on divinity in place, it remains to consider the particular cognitive role of metaphor as set against literal terminology. To use the framework of the three theories set out above, the question becomes: are metaphors for gods epistemic, nonpropositional or illustrative?

3. *The Cognitive Role of Metaphor in Theology*

To begin with the illustrative thesis, the situation in theology is distinct from other areas of inquiry in that, although critics hold that there is literal language for God, no-one argues that metaphors in theology are always reducible to literal terms or that the literal terms by themselves can give a satisfactory account. Thus even critics who hold the illustrative view for metaphors and models in other areas of thought do not claim that this offers a satisfactory account of metaphor in theology. For example, Frederick Ferré⁷⁵ believes that in science there exists an 'abstract calculus' or 'theoretical matrix' which 'can, if need be, exist and function without interpretation by a model'. But he does not regard theological enquiry as having the same recourse to a non-figurative account. Soskice offers the following synopsis of this view (p. 107): 'whereas in sci-

⁷⁵ Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion*, p. 375, quoted by Soskice, p. 113.

entific thought the subservience of the model to the theory means that the model is a useful but dispensable heuristic, in religion there can be no comparable retreat into pure theory, for in religion the models are all that we have'. Theologians who hold divergent opinions on the cognitive role of metaphor nevertheless agree on this fundamental reliance of theology on metaphors and models: R. Hepburn has described theological language as a 'wheel of images'⁷⁶; Sallie McFague regards the whole of theology as 'the elaboration of a few key metaphors and models'⁷⁷ and Soskice maintains that (p. 140) 'in our stammering after a transcendent God we must speak, for the most part, metaphorically or not at all'. In view of the consensus that theology relies on metaphor, the illustrative thesis is not accepted as adequate for theological metaphors. Thus for contemporary theologians the question is whether metaphors for God are principally nonpropositional or epistemic.

a) The Emotive Thesis in Theology

In theology, the nonpropositional thesis is aligned with the more familiar account of 'emotive' language which emerges from the logical positivists' distinction between emotive and scientific uses of language. On the emotive view metaphors have a significant effect on the hearer, stimulating certain responses and evoking particular moods and feelings but are not designed primarily to convey information. Soskice discusses the emotive view of theological models and metaphors in some depth and sums up its main assertions as follows (p. 107): 'Religious models . . . do not embody theories or explanations but serve to evoke a response from the listener, and to call to his mind or present before him an issue with forcefulness.' This is the view of Frederick Ferré⁷⁸ who concludes (*Basic Modern*, p. 381): 'religious imagery is above all a supremely intensive value phenomenon by which, for the sake of comprehensiveness, men also try to think'. Ferré rejects the negative view of emotive language that emerges from verificational analysis,⁷⁹ and argues that the term 'emotive' is, in fact, misleading (*Language, Logic and God*, p. 156): 'The blanket term "emotive" conceals . . . the fundamental difference between two sorts of non-informational effect which language works on its interpreters'. These two types of non-informational effect he

⁷⁶ R. Hepburn, 'Demythologizing and the problem of validity' (p. 237), quoted by Soskice, p. 118

⁷⁷ McFague, *Models of God*, preface p. xi.

⁷⁸ Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion and Language, Logic and God*.

⁷⁹ Verificational analysis is a development of the 'verification principle' of logical positivism. Ferré offers a summary of this type of analysis in *Language, Logic and God* (preface and chapter 2). See esp. p. 32: 'The sorry predicament of theological discourse is readily interpreted by the logic of verificational analysis. Factual meaning is lacking for theological statements . . . And the logical contradictions within theological speech arise from the misguided attempt to discuss a pseudo subject-matter which inevitably leads all who will follow into paradox and incomprehensibility. The cause for this theological misuse of language is to be found in the emotions — for emotive meaning is the only "meaning" which theological discourse may claim'.

names 'reactive' and 'responsive' significance,⁸⁰ and explains how symbols and models 'of great responsive depth' play a crucial role in theology by 'synthesizing our concepts in a coherent manner' and by 'illuminating our experience' (p. 156). Thus Ferré refines the negative version of the emotive view, wherein 'emotive' comes very close to meaning 'non-cognitive', and develops a view of the cognitive role of theistic models and metaphors which rests on the emotional or valuational significance of language.

Soskice acknowledges the 'indisputably emotive character of religious imagery' but contends that any metaphor can have an emotive or affective power only if it is taken as explanatory (pp. 108 ff.). She discusses a weaker version of the emotive view whereby religious models and metaphors are regarded not as referring to a transcendent God but as explaining and describing human experience and response.⁸¹ This is to take an anthropocentric approach and to regard theological metaphors not as explanatory and descriptive of divine nature but as fictions with a principally emotive or evaluative significance within human experience.⁸² Sallie McFague adopts this approach and explains her method of theology:⁸³ 'As remythologization, such theology acknowledges that it is, as it were, painting a picture. The picture may be full and rich, but it is a picture. What this sort of enterprise makes very clear is that theology is mostly fiction: it is the elaboration of a few key metaphors and models'. Soskice rejects this emotive view of theological metaphors and establishes her own 'critical realist' position, which has important affinities with the epistemic view as set out above.

b) The Epistemic Thesis in Theology

Soskice explores the comparison between the use of models and metaphors in science and theology and concludes that in both areas of enquiry metaphors are explanatory and indispensable (p. 116). She takes a strong line on what it means for a model to be explanatory, arguing that the key issue is that of reference or 'reality depiction' (p. 118). On the use of metaphor in science, Soskice identifies the 'critical realist' position which maintains first that in important cases 'the model or analogue is the theory' (p. 115)⁸⁴ and second that scientific models refer to external reality. Such *critical* realism is carefully distinguished from 'naïve' realism whereby the theist simply assumes that there is no difficulty in talking of God in the same way as talking of observable reality.

⁸⁰ 'Reactive' significance is conditioned by conventional processes of association in language while 'responsive' significance is much rarer and more profound (p. 156): 'Whereas we "react" to emotionally conditioned phrases, we "respond" to symbols which touch the springs of human motivation. Such symbols are invested with what I should like to call "responsive" significance'.

⁸¹ Soskice, p. 110.

⁸² Soskice names this version of the emotive view 'Idealist', see pp. 120 ff. and 145 ff.

⁸³ McFague, *Models of God*, p. xi.

⁸⁴ Soskice's review of the 'critical realist' position in science includes the accounts of Mary Hesse and Richard Boyd, pp. 112 ff.

This would be to assume, for example, that to say God 'gets angry' or is a 'king' is to use straightforwardly descriptive vocabulary (pp. 118-9). Soskice understandably rejects this approach and develops the more sophisticated critical realist position whereby theological metaphors can be understood as reality-depicting in the light of recent theories of reference. According to these theories developed by Donnellan, Kripke and Putnam (see Soskice, pp. 124 ff.), successful reference in language use need not involve exhaustive or unrevisable definition, since causal relations allow reference without definition. Thus, if *x* causes *y*, where *y* is a familiar experience or event, then even if *x* is somewhat obscure, it can still be spoken of and referred to meaningfully. Soskice is careful to clarify that the critical realist does not maintain that certain theories, models or metaphors offer a privileged account of objective reality, and explains (p. 131): 'What we are committed to is something more like Boyd's idea that some general terms "afford epistemic access to kinds which are 'natural' in the sense of corresponding to important causal features of the world" (Boyd, p. 392⁸⁵)'. Soskice follows Boyd's analysis of theory-constitutive metaphors and argues that such metaphorical terminology while not necessarily descriptive, may nevertheless be reality-depicting (p. 136). The theological application of critical realism rests on the view that God is the cause of the world (pp. 138-40), and this causal relationship allows the theist's language about God to be referential without claim to definitive knowledge (p. 141). Thus the theist can use metaphor to refer to God and to point to divine effects without claiming to offer a definition (p. 141): 'We are saying that the theist can reasonably take his talk of God, bound as it is within a wheel of images, as being reality depicting, while at the same time acknowledging its inadequacy as description'. Later she is again keen to emphasize that models and metaphors do not actually prove anything about the divine nature (p. 148): 'Our concern is with conceptual possibility rather than proof, and with a demonstration that we may justly claim to speak of God without claiming to define Him, and to do so by means of metaphor. Realism accommodates figurative speech which is reality-depicting without claiming to be directly descriptive'. The particular feature of metaphor that makes it indispensable in both science and theology is its vagueness or open-endedness. For the use of metaphor creates a set of related terms which can offer a coherent structure for a given concept while signalling that this is not to be taken as an exhaustive description. The metaphorical terms set up a useful relational structure but make it clear that this structure is, at best, only a partial 'fit'. Soskice explains (p. 133): 'the theory-constitutive metaphor is useful because it provides a network of partially denoting terms — it is just that vagueness inherent in the newly introduced metaphorical terminology, the lack of strict definitional stipulation, which allows for the revisability necessary to any account that aims to adapt itself to the world'. Thus for the critical realist metaphor plays a central and irreplaceable role in theological discourse since its special features of vagueness and open-endedness make it well suited to the task of referring without defining. Sec-

⁸⁵ Boyd 'Metaphor and theory change', p. 511.

ond, this metaphorical discourse, according to causal theories of reference, offers more than mere fictions or emotive messages about divinity, since it is an attempt to refer to and to talk about external reality.

V. Metaphors for the Soul: From Religion to Psychology

The concept of soul is used in various distinct areas of enquiry: theological speculation on transcendental and religious experience; psychological accounts of rational and emotional behaviour; and sociological and philosophical debates on morality. As Plato seeks to understand central problems of human nature and behaviour, he provides a holistic analysis of ψυχή which cuts across various contemporary disciplines. Recent research in some of these disciplines can help to shed light on Plato's account of soul, since critics working in quite separate areas of enquiry have developed their own specific views on the issue of how soul or mind is spoken about and analysed. This issue is a huge one and detailed discussion of the current research would stretch far beyond the limits of this project. But two disciplines in particular have in recent times made important contributions to understanding the significance of soul metaphors. First, the research on metaphor in theology outlined above is relevant also to the use of metaphor for the transcendental and religious experience of the soul. For the challenges facing a writer trying to illuminate these aspects of soul are broadly the same as those found in speaking about divinity at large. Therefore the theological research helps to illuminate Plato's use of metaphor for the soul's metaphysical status, its relationship with the divine and its afterlife experience. Second, contemporary research in psychology has established the centrality of metaphor in psychological discourse and enquiry — which is relevant to Plato's discussion of the functions of soul (or 'mind')⁸⁶ in the areas of human emotion, motivation, decision-making and general character development. The issue of metaphor is currently receiving much critical attention in the field of cognitive psychology, and this provides useful insights on Plato's metaphors for soul. Although research in this field is still emerging,⁸⁷ the debate has already established some fundamental areas of agreement which provide a useful starting point for my own project.

Michael S. Kearns in *Metaphors of Mind in Fiction and Psychology* sets out some of the history of speculation in this field, pointing out that most of the psychological philosophers of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were not only aware of, but also explicitly dealt with, the issue of metaphorical speech applied to the human mind (p. 2). Kearns explains that although the general view of philosophers in this period was that metaphorical language for the mind ought to be avoided, nevertheless

⁸⁶ The Greek word ψυχή can be translated *inter alia* as 'life', 'soul', 'mind', or 'consciousness'.

⁸⁷ In his concluding comments in *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*, a collection of essays by psychologists in different fields (published in 1990), Leary observes (p. 361): 'This volume marks only a beginning'.

the philosophers themselves persisted in using it. In eighteenth-century philosophy there emerged a thesis — which has come to be known as the ‘autonomy thesis’ — which held, in Kearns’ words, that ‘the science of the mind should proceed to frame its laws and principles in terms of its own specialized vocabulary without trying to force translations into the vocabulary of any already existing natural science’ (p. 4). The problem was how to produce such a specialized vocabulary. Kearns discusses the figurative language for mind employed by philosophers in this period (such as Thomas Reid, Thomas Brown and, in the nineteenth century, Dugald Stewart) and shows how their accounts come to depend on one particular metaphor: the ‘mind-as-entity’ (Kearns, p. 15) — a metaphor which attributes to the mind ‘the traits of tangibility, passivity, impressibility, simplicity of structure, and specificity of location’ (p. 46). Such language of mind is in direct contravention of the autonomy thesis maintained by the same philosophers. Kearns’ own conclusion on this dilemma is succinct (p. 15): ‘In general, the problem results from a tension between the drive to develop a non-metaphorical language of the mind and the intrinsically metaphorical nature of all such language. Such a problem is clearly insoluble, and once identified it does not require much additional explication’. What is relevant for my study is Kearns’ ready acceptance that all language about the mind is ‘intrinsically’ metaphorical, a view which is expressed at various times throughout his book.⁸⁸ Examples include the following general statements: ‘except for facts about the structure and function of the nervous system and the sensory apparatus, nothing having to do with the mind can be described literally’ (p. 21); and ‘[metaphors] are figuring forth the phenomena of thought, which by common consent cannot be described literally’ (p. 43). In short, Kearns cites and supports a general consensus that mental phenomena are ‘literally inexpressible’ and can only be expressed by means of metaphor (pp. 24-25).

This general agreement on the cognitive role of metaphor in psychology is acknowledged by Leary in his essay, ‘Psyche’s muse’, and is evident in the various articles in his volume, *Metaphors in the History of Psychology*. Leary discusses both the importance of metaphor in biological science, social science and psychology and the reflections of thinkers in these fields on the nature and role of metaphor. His history of the analysis of metaphor in this century tells how (p. 21) ‘around the turn of the century, some psychologists, at least, were keenly aware of the metaphorical nature of psychological knowledge’ but how the ‘positivist tide’ caused awareness of the importance of metaphor in psychology to ‘recede’ (pp. 21-2):

Given the positivist mentality of so many twentieth-century psychologists, it was natural enough that awareness of the metaphoricity of psychological concepts and terms receded over the middle portion of this century, leaving the impression that both scientific and applied psychology, unlike earlier philosophical psychology, rested on an unambiguously rooted conceptual foundation.

⁸⁸ See also p. 17, pp. 22-23 and p. 41.

However, he notes that this awareness has returned to the discipline in recent times (p. 22): 'Fortunately, in more recent years, the variation or pluralism of twentieth-century psychology, . . . has come to be recognized . . . , and, not unrelatedly, awareness of the metaphorical nature of psychological theory, and of the metaphorical framing of psychological practice, has increased significantly'. This awareness has produced what is now an orthodoxy amongst psychologists that metaphor is a necessary and irreplaceable feature of psychological inquiry.⁸⁹ In my chapters on soul I shall analyse Plato's metaphors in the light of this view and try to ascertain how far these Greek metaphors can be described as cognitively irreplaceable. However, before Plato's use of metaphor is analysed, I shall turn to the questions of whether Plato himself held any views on the role of metaphor in theory-building and what expectations he may have had about his own metaphors for the gods and the soul.

⁸⁹ See e.g.: Averill, p. 123; McReynolds, pp. 160-1; Hoffman, Cochran and Nead, pp. 174-7 and 212-3; D.L. Smith, p. 260; Gergen, p. 267; Danziger, pp. 335 and 351-2. See also Robert J. Sternberg, *Metaphors of Mind, Conceptions of the Nature of Intelligence*, whose introductory remarks take for granted that metaphor plays a significant role in developing scientific theory (preface, p. ix): 'The main theme is that theories of intelligence are guided by underlying metaphors of mind. To understand the theories and their interrelations properly, one has to understand the underlying metaphors'.

2. Plato on Images and Myths

I. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to determine Plato's own view about the metaphors and images that he uses for the gods and the soul. The rhetorical term μεταφορά does not appear in the dialogues⁹⁰ and there is no separate term for metaphor as distinct from other types of image and comparison. Rather, Plato uses εἰκών as a general term for images, comparisons and likenesses, along with other more specific terms, such as ὁμοιώσις (likeness, comparison), ἀναλογία (analogy), εἶδωλον (image, likeness) and παράδειγμα (pattern, model). Although there are a number of comments on the role of imagery and likenesses in the dialogues, there is no systematic account. Thus, in order to determine Plato's attitudes to imagery and its cognitive role, the commentator must try to reconcile evidence from a number of dialogues. The first section of this chapter (2.II) will deal with the range of uses of the term εἰκών in Plato and the second (2.III) will attempt to identify Plato's general attitude to images and their use in philosophical discourse and will closely examine the evidence of the *Politicus*. From there the debate will move on to try to determine Plato's own view of his metaphors for the gods (2.IV) and the soul (2.V). The final section of the chapter (2.VI) will address the issue of Plato's use of myth and whether this affects the assessment of his metaphors.

II. Plato's Use of the Term εἰκών

Although Plato does not distinguish metaphor from other types of image and comparison, metaphor is, of course, used in his works and is, on occasion, explicitly referred to as an εἰκών (image). The noun εἰκών and the related verb ἀπεικάζω (express by a comparison; liken, compare with) are general terms for comparisons and illustrations in Plato, but they also refer explicitly to metaphors.

In *Ancient Rhetorical Theories of Simile and Comparison* Marsh H. McCall has examined the use of εἰκών in ancient texts. He shows how εἰκών refers to simile as well as to other rhetorical comparisons and discusses the Platonic use of the term. He tells how (p. 12) more than sixty occurrences are listed in Ast and how 'over twenty are in rhetorical contexts',⁹¹ but yet (p. 12), 'Of these only three may be said certainly and a fourth possibly to refer narrowly to simile.'⁹² McCall's conclusion that the most

⁹⁰ The noun μεταφορά does not occur either as a rhetorical or non-rhetorical term, but the related verb μεταφέρειν is used in the non-rhetorical sense of 'carry across, transfer' (*Tim.* 58b and 73e).

⁹¹ The *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* computer database confirms McCall's account, showing seventy seven occurrences of forms of εἰκών, with twenty three of these in rhetorical contexts.

⁹² The three occurrences where εἰκών certainly refers to simile are at *Meno* 80a4-7, *Phdo.* 87b and *Symp.* 215a, and the possible reference is at *Polit.* 309b (McCall, pp. 12-15).

common rhetorical usage of εἰκών in Plato is in the general sense of 'illustration', 'image', 'comparison' would seem correct,⁹³ but his view that the term εἰκών is never a synonym for metaphor⁹⁴ requires qualification. For although μεταφορά does not occur in the dialogues, nevertheless εἰκών is used to refer to metaphor. There are two occurrences of εἰκών which McCall classes as references to general comparisons but which actually refer to metaphors: *Meno* 72a and *Republic* 531b2-4.⁹⁵

At *Meno* 72a Socrates has asked Meno to explain his idea of virtue and Meno replies that there are different virtues for men, women, children, old men, free men and slaves. Socrates then comments, rather wryly (72a6): 'Πολλῇ γέ τιτι εὐτυχίᾳ ἔοικα κεχρησθαι, ὦ Μένων, εἰ μίαν ζητῶν ἀρετὴν σμῆνός τι ἀνιέρηκα ἀρετῶν παρὰ σοὶ κείμενον' ('I seem to be enjoying a great piece of good luck, Meno, if, when I was looking for a single excellence, I have found a swarm of excellences in your possession', tr. Sharples). Since the noun σμῆνος means 'swarm of bees', the phrase σμῆνος ἀρετῶν ('swarm of excellences') offers the semantic clash that is distinctive of metaphor, with a tenor (excellence, virtue) and vehicle (swarm of bees) juxtaposed with no explicit term of comparison. That σμῆνος does indeed denote bees here is confirmed at 72a8 as Socrates comments on his own turn of phrase: 'ἄτάρ, ὦ Μένων, κατὰ ταύτην τὴν εἰκόνα τὴν περὶ τὰ σμῆνη, εἴ μου ἐρομένου μελίττης περὶ οὐσίας ὅτι ποτ' ἐστίν' ('But, Meno, to follow this image of "swarms": if I asked you what constitutes being a bee', tr. Sharples). While Sharples translates εἰκόνα as 'image', which is perfectly correct, Guthrie translates: 'But, seriously, to carry on this metaphor of the swarm'. Although metaphor is part of the family group of images and illustrations, it nevertheless has its own distinguishing features which can be readily recognised in this passage and which would account for Guthrie's translation.

The occurrence of εἰκών at *Republic* 531b is also judged by McCall to be a reference to a general illustration or comparison, but again the term refers to metaphor. In this section Glaucon comments on students of musical harmony who engage in fruitless empirical experiments and Socrates replies (531b2-4):

Σὺ μὲν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τοὺς χρηστοὺς λέγεις τοὺς ταῖς χορδαῖς πράγματα παρέχοντας καὶ βασανίζοντας, ἐπὶ τῶν κολλόπων στρεβλοῦντας. ἵνα δὲ μὴ μακροτέρα ἢ εἰκὼν γίγνηται πλήκτρῳ τε πληγῶν γιγνομένων καὶ

⁹³ McCall, p. 17: 'The total impression of Plato's concept of εἰκών is hardly in doubt. Of the four instances in which the term refers at least in part to simile, all but one (the *Symp.* passage) allow in fact considerable latitude of meaning. More than a dozen other instances show εἰκών in an unambiguous sense of "illustration", "image", "comparison". This is certainly Plato's understanding of the term.' For the use of εἰκών in these senses, see McCall, pp. 15-17.

⁹⁴ Commenting on a passage in the *Phdr.*, McCall observes that εἰκών is never used as a synonym for metaphor (p. 5): 'Nothing in the context narrows εἰκονολογία to any specific form of likeness, let alone equates it with metaphor (μεταφορά) for which the simple term εἰκών is never a synonym.'

⁹⁵ McCall cites *Meno* 72a in a footnote (p. 14) and discusses *Rep.* 531b on p. 16.

κατηγορίας πέρι καὶ ἐξαρνήσεως καὶ ἀλαζονείας χορδῶν, παύομαι τῆς εἰκόνης καὶ οὐ φημι τούτους λέγειν,

You, said I, are speaking of the worthies who vex and torture the strings and rack them on the pegs. But — not to draw out the comparison with strokes of the plectrum and the musician's complaints of too responsive and too reluctant strings — I drop the figure, and tell you that I do not mean these people. (tr. McCall, p. 16)

In a footnote (p. 16) McCall comments that Jowett translates εἰκὼν 'carelessly' with 'metaphor'. But this would seem to be a reasonable translation given that εἰκὼν clearly refers to a metaphorical usage. The phrase ταῖς χορδαῖς πράγματα παρέχοντας ('causing trouble to the strings') is a metaphor, as it offers the novel presentation of musical strings as people, an idea further developed by βασανίζοντας and στρεβλοῦντας. It is possible to take these words literally in this context as they can mean 'testing' and 'tightening', both of which are appropriate to musical strings. But both terms carry very strong secondary senses of 'torturing' and 'stretching on the rack', and these senses are clearly activated, since the introductory phrase πράγματα παρέχοντας has already established the relationship of persecutor and victim. As there is a semantic incompatibility in the phrase τοὺς ταῖς χορδαῖς πράγματα παρέχοντας and as there is no explicit term of comparison between strings and people, εἰκὼν is here a reference to a metaphor rather than to a general type of illustration or comparison.

Further, like εἰκὼν, ἀπεικάζω is used to refer both to general types of comparison and illustration⁹⁶ and to metaphor.⁹⁷ In *Laws* II the Athenian is discussing music and comments on the correct terms of musical appreciation (655a4-8):

ἀλλ' ἐν γὰρ μουσικῇ καὶ σχήματα μὲν καὶ μέλη ἔνεστιν, περὶ ῥυθμὸν καὶ ἁρμονίαν οὕσης τῆς μουσικῆς, ὥστε εὐρυθμὸν μὲν καὶ εὐ-ἁρμοστον, εὐχρῶν δὲ μέλος ἢ σχῆμα οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπεικάσαντα, ὥσπερ οἱ χοροδιδάσκαλοι ἀπεικάζουσιν, ὁρθῶς φθέγγεσθαι·

But music is a matter of rhythm and harmony, and involves tunes and movements of the body; this means that while it is legitimate to speak of a 'rhythmical' or a 'harmonious' movement or tune, we cannot properly apply to either of them the chorus-masters' metaphor 'brilliantly coloured' (tr. Saunders).

⁹⁶ For examples of this general use of ἀπεικάζω and the related verb εἰκάζω see: *Phd.* 76e, 92b7, 99e5; *Crat.* 431c3; *Theaet.* 198c10; *Polit.* 297e8; *Parm.* 137a2; *Symp.* 221c8, d4; *Phdr.* 265b; *Meno* 80c3, 98a9; *Rep.* 404d12, 464b1, 488a1, 489c3; and *Laws* 905e5, 906d7, 964d7, 967c7.

⁹⁷ Outside rhetorical contexts ἀπεικάζω, along with its root verb εἰκάζω, is used for forming and expressing likenesses (*Crat.* 414a, 426e2; *Rep.* 488a5; *Crit.* 107d1, 107e2) and in the sense of 'serving as an image for' (*Crat.* 432b; *Phil.* 61c4). In the middle voice ἀπεικάζω means 'make oneself like, copy' (*Rep.* 369d3, 536a5) and in the passive 'to be made like, be made as a copy' (*Tim.* 39e).

Here ἀπεικάσαντα and ἀπεικάζουσιν refer to the use of the description 'brilliantly coloured' when applied to movement or music, and thus the verb denotes the forming of an expression which is readily identified as a metaphor. The Athenian even makes explicit the point that this particular usage is not 'proper' or 'standard' (ὀρθῶς), a comment which anticipates Aristotle's discussion of metaphor among forms of speech which are not 'current' or 'standard'.⁹⁸

Plato, then, uses the term εἰκών for metaphors, similes and other types of verbal comparisons and illustrations. But he also uses εἰκών outside the rhetorical sphere for works of art, reflections, shadows, copies and imitations. An awareness of this full range of meanings of εἰκών is a necessary background for understanding Plato's attitude to rhetorical images.

1. Works of Art, Artistic Representations

McCall observes (p. ix) that before being used as a rhetorical term, εἰκών meant 'statue' or 'portrait'. In Plato εἰκών is used of statues (*Phaedrus* 235d and *Critias* 116e), and of paintings, the figures in paintings, the likenesses captured by paintings⁹⁹ and artistic representations in general.¹⁰⁰ The term also denotes representation in music¹⁰¹ and the likenesses created by actors on stage: at *Laws* 935e it refers to a mimicking gesture and in the *Philebus* (49c) there is a reference to the 'image of strong ignorance' being portrayed on stage. Finally, εἰκών is also used for the representations of good and bad characters in poetry (*Republic* 401b).

2. Reflection, Shadow

Εἰκών is used in the senses of visible reflection and shadow at *Phaedo* 99e; *Republic* 402b, 509d and 510e.

3. Copy, Imitation

Εἰκών is an established term for copies or imitations in works of art but Plato also uses the term for the relationship between the phenomenal world and ultimate reality. At *Timaeus* 29b-c and 92c the phenomenal world is said to be an εἰκών of the world of the Forms, and at 37d5-7 Time is described as the 'moving likeness of eternity':

εἰκὼ δ' ἐπενόει κινητὸν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν λοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον δὲ δὴ χρόνον ὠνομάκαμεν.

⁹⁸ See Chapter 1 (1.II).

⁹⁹ *Crat.* 424e, 431c; *Soph.* 236a; *Phil.* 39b.

¹⁰⁰ *Prot.* 312d; *Laws* 669a-c and 931a.

¹⁰¹ *Laws* 668c.

counterfeit coin. So, while there is some sort of likeness between original and image, there is clearly also a great and necessary difference, a point that is made at *Cratylus* 432d:

ἢ οὐκ αἰσθάνη ὅσου ἐνδέουσιν αἱ εἰκόνες τὰ αὐτὰ ἔχειν ἐκείνοις ὧν εἰκόνες εἰσὶν;

Ἔγωγε.¹⁰²

Do you not perceive that images are very far from having qualities which are the exact counterparts of the realities which they represent?

Yes. I see (tr. Jowett).

Image and reality, then, are different in important respects and, for Plato, the reality or truth (that which is primary) is always and in all cases far superior to the image (that which is secondary or derived). In the *Cratylus* Socrates speaks of names as images and asks whether it is better to test ideas against the names/images of things or against the things themselves. The answer is not unexpected (439a7-b3):

ποτέρα ἂν εἴη καλλίων καὶ σαφεστέρα ἢ μάθησις; ἐκ τῆς εἰκόνος μανθάνειν αὐτὴν τε αὐτὴν εἰ καλῶς εἴκασται, καὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἧς ἦν εἰκὼν, ἢ ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας αὐτὴν τε αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα αὐτῆς εἰ πρεπόντως εἴργασται;

Ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας μοι δοκεῖ ἀνάγκη εἶναι.

Which is likely to be the nobler or clearer way — to learn of the image whether the image and the truth of which the image is the expression have been rightly conceived, or to learn of the truth whether the truth and the image of it have been duly executed?

I should say that we must learn of the truth (tr. Jowett).

Plato is also careful to separate image from reality in a passage in the *Republic*. Speaking of the nature of dialectic, Socrates regrets that he cannot tell Glaucon its true nature but can only offer an image (533a1-4):

Οὐκέτ', ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὦ φίλε Γλαύκων, οἷος τ' ἔση ἀκολουθεῖν — ἐπεὶ τό γ' ἐμὸν οὐδὲν ἂν προθυμίας ἀπολίποι — οὐδ' εἰκόνα ἂν ἔτι οὐ λέγομεν ἴδοις, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀληθές, ὃ γε δὴ μοι φαίνεται —

'You won't be able to follow me there, my dear Glaucon' I said, 'which is a pity, because there'd be no shortage of determination from me, and what you'd see there wouldn't be an image of what we're talking about: you'd see the truth itself — or that's what I think, anyway' (tr. Waterfield).

The extended allegory of the cave in the *Republic* also shows that Plato was concerned with the gulf between image and reality and, moreover, considered images very much

¹⁰² See also *Crat.* 432b.

But he took thought to make, as it were, a moving likeness of eternity; and, at the same time that he ordered the Heaven, he made of eternity that abides in unity, an everlasting likeness moving according to number — that to which we have given the name Time (tr. Cornford).

This use of εἰκών arises in part from the dominant model in the *Timaeus* of God as a craftsman, whereby God creates the world as a copy of the perfect, uncreated Forms. But εἰκών is also used in the sense of 'imitation' or 'copy' in the *Republic* where there is no such artistic or artisanal context. At *Republic* 402c Socrates is talking of the abstract qualities of self-discipline, courage *etc.* and makes a distinction between 'the qualities themselves' and their 'εἰκόνες' (τὰ . . . εἶδη . . . καὶ αὐτὰ καὶ εἰκόνας αὐτῶν). He does not explain what he means by this distinction but it would seem to suggest that the qualities can be present in human behaviour either in their fullness or in a derivative form. These derivative versions are thus spoken of as 'images', 'imitations' or 'reflections' (εἰκόνες) of the original virtues.

Thus the range of uses of εἰκών (image) includes the following:

- (1) illustration, comparison;
- (2) simile;
- (3) metaphor;
- (4) artistic representation, work of art;
- (5) reflection, shadow;
- (6) copy, imitation.

To understand what the term εἰκών meant for Plato, the features common to the different types of εἰκόνες must be ascertained. Each type of image is based on a relationship involving some sort of comparison or likeness between the two entities, *a* and *b*. In illustrations object *a* is likened to *b* for the sake of comparison, as, for example, the soul is likened to the state in the extended illustration of the *Republic*. Both simile and metaphor establish a comparison between tenor and vehicle. Sculptors and artists aim to create likenesses of the originals when they create statues and representational paintings. The shape of visible reflections and shadows are like the objects which cast them, and copies and imitations are designed to be as alike as possible to their originals. Each image, then, is like the original in some way. But in each case there is both a primary (*a*) and secondary entity (*b*), and these are quite different from each other: in illustrations, comparisons, similes and metaphors there is the original subject under discussion and the extraneous subject introduced for the sake of comparison (e.g. soul as state); in works of (representational) art the original entity is the artist's model of which a likeness is created; in reflections and shadows there is an original entity which casts a reflection in water or a shadow when illuminated in a particular way; and finally, in the case of copies and imitations, there is an original which the imitator attempts to reproduce as closely as possible and which serves as the standard against which the copy is to be measured, as can be seen in the example of an original and

the inferiors of the realities they reflect or represent. As Richard Robinson (*Plato's Earlier Dialectic*) observes, 'Plato's whole theoretical philosophy is largely a condemnation of images and a struggle to get away from them' (p. 220).¹⁰³ Lloyd (*PA*, pp. 394-5) analyses Plato's views on the use of images in argument and notes how there are 'certain passages in which the use of images is criticised, or in which the dangers of relying on similarities in argument are pointed out' (p. 394). First he discusses how Plato makes a firm distinction between an image or probable argument on the one hand and a proof or demonstration on the other (pp. 394 ff. on *Phaedo* 92c-d and *Theaetetus* 162e) and at times stresses that the conclusions suggested by certain analogies cannot be accepted without verification (p. 400).¹⁰⁴ Second, Lloyd observes how Plato makes the explicit point that likenesses may be deceptive, as in passages such as *Sophist* (231a6-8): 'τὸν δὲ ἀσφαλῆ δεῖ πάντων μάλιστα περὶ τὰς ὁμοιότητος ἀεὶ ποιεῖσθαι τὴν φυλακὴν· ὀλισθηρότατον γὰρ τὸ γένος' ('But a careful person should always be on his guard against resemblances above all, for they are a most slippery tribe,' tr. Lloyd, *PA*, p. 395). Melissa Lane¹⁰⁵ also draws attention to Plato's concerns about likeness or resemblance (p. 19):

Resemblance is called into question in the *Protagoras*' doubts about similarity (331d1-e4), in the *Parmenides*' regress of likeness (132d1-133a7; cf. 147-8), in the *Philebus*' debate over whether all pleasures, and all forms of knowledge, must be like one another (12c-14a), in the *Sophist*'s warning about the slipperiness of resemblance (231a4-b1).

In such passages Plato is candid that likenesses can be deceptive, which leads the reader to the obvious conclusion that one should be wary of how they are used in argument.

Since Plato expresses the view that images and likenesses are inferior to reality and can be deceptive, one might expect him to have avoided them. However, for all his criticisms, Plato not only uses a good many images, paradigms and analogies in his writings but also speaks of images as serving an important cognitive role.

III. Plato on the Cognitive Role of εἰκόνες

Plato often introduces the use of images and likenesses as a preliminary or second-best method of undertaking an inquiry. In the *Republic* at 506d Glaucon says that he and

¹⁰³ Plato's concern to distinguish images from truth or reality can also be seen in his comments on artistic εἰκόνες. In a famous passage of the *Rep.* (596a-97e) Plato divides reality into three levels: the Forms, visible objects and artistic images, and describes the tragic poet, along with all other artists, as (597e6) τρίτος τις ἀπὸ βασιλέως καὶ ἀληθείας πεφυκώς (two generations away from the throne of truth, tr. Waterfield). Verdenius comments on the status of these artistic images (*Mimesis*, p. 13): 'these images are situated on the lowest level of reality and they are two grades away from the essential nature of things'.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd cites as evidence for this view *Rep.* 368d ff. and 434e ff. (*PA*, p. 400). See also p. 397.

¹⁰⁵ M.S. Lane, *Method and Politics in Plato's 'Statesman'*.

Adeimantus would be happy to hear an account of the Good presented in the same way as those on the other virtues. Socrates' reply introduces the idea of a secondary account which would bear a likeness to the original:

'So would I, Glaucon,' I said, 'very happy. But I'm afraid it'll be more than I can manage, and that my malformed efforts will make me ridiculous. What I suggest, my friends, is that we forget about trying to define goodness itself for the time being . . . However, I am prepared to talk about something which seems to me to be the child of goodness and to bear a very strong resemblance to it. Would you like me to do that?' (tr. Waterfield).

The account which follows offers the image of the Sun. Similarly, when discussing the nature of reason in the *Laws* (897d ff.), the Athenian advises switching from an examination of the object itself to an image of it (897d8-e2):

Still, in answering this question we mustn't assume that mortal eyes will ever be able to look upon reason and get to know it adequately: let's not produce darkness at noon, so to speak, by looking at the sun direct. We can save our sight by looking at an *image* of the object we're asking about. (tr. Saunders)¹⁰⁶

Thus images are quite clearly distinguished from truth or reality and are offered merely as the next best thing when truth or reality is, for whatever reason, impossible to set out or to explore.

Plato is critical of images and likenesses since they are inferior to truth and reality. But when he is unable to give a direct account of various objects or concepts, he uses images to tell what the objects or concepts are like, clearly believing this to be a worthwhile exercise. There are no passages in Plato, so far as I can see, that claim that images provide direct access to truths or knowledge which evade exposition in other ways. While I agree with Lloyd's point that (*PA*, p. 400): 'In practice Plato often seems to ignore the recommendations and warnings which appear in many of the passages in which he discusses the use of images and likenesses', and while I accept Robinson's observations that Plato sometimes assumes, with no independent verification, that conclusions reached on the basis of likenesses are correct,¹⁰⁷ still, at least in *theory* Plato was very careful to distinguish εἰκόνες from truth and reality. However, despite the frequent passages where Plato offers a negative assessment of images as opposed to reality, on occasion he actually recommends using likenesses, as Lloyd observes (*PA*, p. 395): 'But elsewhere in the middle or late dialogues there are other passages we must now consider in which the use of analogies is recommended in certain contexts, whether for didactic purposes, i.e. in order to instruct a pupil, or indeed,

¹⁰⁶ See also *Phdr.* 246a, which will be discussed later in 2.IV.

¹⁰⁷ R. Robinson, *Plato's Earlier Dialectic*, p. 205: 'introduced merely as a likely way of suggesting hypotheses about the individual, [analogy] gradually comes to profess not merely to suggest such hypotheses but also to prove them true, and in the process it produces a wealth of political philosophy'.

in order to intuit or reveal the truth'. In his discussion of these other passages¹⁰⁸ Lloyd argues (pp. 397-400) that analogy was regarded by Plato as having both didactic and heuristic functions. This distinction between the didactic and heuristic functions of analogies is extremely important for my discussion and it is necessary to try to clarify what expectations Plato had of the use of likenesses in argument, whether those likenesses are suggested in the form of images, metaphors, analogies or models.

First, then, the didactic function. As Lloyd observes, at *Politicus* 277d1-2 the Eleatic Stranger makes the important general statement: 'Χαλεπόν, ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον ἱκανῶς ἐνδείκνυσθαι τι τῶν μειζόνων' ('It's a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate any of the greater subjects without using models', tr. Rowe).¹⁰⁹ From here the Stranger goes on to provide the example of children learning to read by the method of having known syllables placed next to unknown syllables so that they may come to grasp the same likeness in the different combinations (278a-b). Lloyd comments (p. 399): 'We see from this illustration first of all that the paradigm has a didactic function; it is a means of teaching a person by leading him from something he knows to something which he does not yet know but which is similar to what he knows.' Lloyd's point can be supported with further passages from the dialogues which also highlight Plato's recognition of the didactic value of images and likenesses. In the *Laws* the Athenian presents an image of human beings as puppets in order to illustrate the nature of virtue, vice and self-control, and introduces the image in the following way (644b9-c2): 'Σαφέστερον ἔτι τοίνυν ἀναλάβωμεν τοῦτ' αὐτὸ ὅτι ποτὲ λέγομεν. καὶ μοι δι' εἰκόνοσ' ἀποδέξασθε ἕαν πως δυνατὸς ὑμῖν γένωμαι δηλῶσαι τὸ τοιοῦτον' ('Let's take up this point again and consider even more closely just what we mean. Perhaps you'll let me try to clarify the issue by means of an illustration', tr. Saunders). In the *Critias* the image of paintings of human and divine subjects is given to illustrate a point about discourses on these themes and Critias says that he employs the image 'to make my meaning still clearer' (ἵνα δὲ σαφέστερον ὃ λέγω δηλώσω, 107b). On numerous other occasions in the dialogues images and illustrations not only clarify points but are also explicitly referred to as being used for this very purpose.¹¹⁰

Second, the heuristic function. In the passages mentioned above, the images and likeness are performing a didactic function: for example, in the case of the children at *Politicus* 278a the teacher already knows the nature of the syllables towards which he is guiding the children. Thus the teacher is in a position to judge the likeness that exists between the known and the unknown. Likewise, when a speaker is using an illustration to clarify a point about a subject he understands, he can judge the extent of the likeness between the two cases (as, for example, the analogy between the growth of

¹⁰⁸ *Rep.* 368d, *Soph.* 218c-d and *Polit.* 277d-278a, 286a-b.

¹⁰⁹ C.J. Rowe, *Plato: Statesman*.

¹¹⁰ See e.g.: *Gorg.* 517d; *Rep.* 487e, 509a, 514a, 517b; *Theaet.* 198d; *Crit.* 107b; *Laws* 644c and 969b (not cited by Lloyd). See also *Phdo.* 87b, discussed by Lloyd at p. 394, and *Laws* 720a-c, discussed by Lloyd at *PA*, p. 400, n.3.

plants and the education of young children, *Euthyphro* 2d). This function of images and likenesses is compatible with the illustrative thesis of metaphor's cognitive role. But sometimes in Plato the use of likenesses in argument is recommended when a speaker explicitly says that he does not know the nature of the object in question, and in these cases the likenesses are performing more than a didactic role. A key passage identified by Lloyd is *Politicus* 278e-279a. Here the Eleatic Stranger speaks of trying to find a model for kingship in order to help them understand the nature of political 'tendance':

... διὰ παραδείγματος¹¹¹ ἐπιχειρεῖν αὖ τὴν τῶν κατὰ πόλιν θεραπείαν
τέχνη γνωρίζειν, ἵνα ὅσαρ ἄντ' ὀνείρατος ἡμῖν γίγνηται;

(Πάνυ μὲν οὖν ὀρθῶς).

... in an attempt once more through the use of a model to recognize in an expert, systematic way what looking after those in the city is, so that it may be present to us in our waking state instead of in a dream?

(Absolutely right) (tr. Rowe).

As Lloyd remarks (*PA*, p. 399), 'in the problem in hand they are not being taught the definition of the kingly art by someone who already knows it — they are attempting to discover it for themselves'. Thus the model is presented in the dialogue as a heuristic device. But what is the precise nature and extent of this heuristic role and is it compatible with the illustrative or the epistemic theses on metaphor? Does Plato suggest that likenesses and images can in themselves stimulate a direct apprehension of truth? Or are they regarded as devices which play a part in helping a person to perceive, but not actually to verify, the truth? Lloyd has recognised that likenesses are presented here as developing understanding by enabling the interlocutors to move from an easier, familiar subject to a more difficult, unfamiliar one. So the model of weaving will allow the interlocutors to gain understanding of the more complex art of statesmanship. But is the model expected to *prove* anything about the nature of statesmanship or merely to suggest propositions which would have to be verified by other means before they could be accepted as true? To put the question in other terms: are the models expected to be demonstrative or merely suggestive? The *Politicus* presents models as demonstrative but in order to understand in what sense, the whole account must be examined in detail. This examination is necessary in order to establish exactly in what sense models are heuristic for Plato.

¹¹¹ On the various translations of this term, Lane notes (p. 46): 'Contra Jowett and Skemp, Rowe employs 'model' to translate παράδειγμα; Rosen concurs, arguing that 'model' embodies a normative sense of standard or rule in contexts where 'example' may be simply any one of a kind (Rosen, 80-3)'. Lane herself prefers 'the deceptively ordinary connotations of "example"' (p. 46).

The Politicus on Likenesses and Models

The theme of likeness and difference is fundamental to the whole of this dialogue and in the course of the debate a number of important statements are made about the method of using models and paradigms in argument.¹¹² The issue at stake here is whether Plato makes any claims in the *Politicus* that models can be demonstrative in the sense of providing knowledge or proof. I shall argue that he does not and shall maintain rather that Plato's assessment of the power of models is cautious and conservative, claiming only that models help to provide understanding through the recognition of common elements. Plato makes no claims that models can offer insight into subjects that are radically unknown.

The art of recognising likenesses and differences underpins much of the discussion of the *Politicus*, as the processes of combination and division are subjected to close scrutiny. Combination or 'collection' is categorised as bringing together those things that are alike, and separation or 'division' as breaking apart those that are different from one another. In the course of the debate four quite different areas of experience are presented in terms of combination and separation: dialectic, weaving, statemanship and the creation of models in speech. Indeed the Stranger makes the global statement that these are the two types of skill in every sphere (282b6): 'καὶ μέγιστα τινὲ κατὰ πάντα ἡμῖν ἦσθιν τέχνη, ἡ συγκριτικὴ τε καὶ διακριτικὴ' ('And there were, we agreed, two great kinds of expertise in every sphere, that of combination and that of separation', tr. Rowe). In the *Politicus* dialectic becomes a process of collection and division, in which recognising likeness is what allows concepts to be collected together and recognising difference is what allows them to be divided. This demands a high level of expertise, and the Stranger explains how some people cannot make the required distinctions (285a-b):

but because of their not being accustomed to carrying on their investigations by dividing according to classes, the people in question both throw these things together at once, despite the degree of difference between them (τοσοῦτον διαφέροντα), thinking them alike (ὁμοία), and correspondingly they do the opposite of this by dividing other things not according to parts, when the rule is that when one perceives first the community (τὴν . . . κοινωνίαν) of the many things, one should not desist until one sees in it all those differences (τὰς διαφορὰς . . . πάσας) that are located in classes, and conversely, with the vari-

¹¹² Lane has rightly observed that this dialogue's contribution to the debate on the role of likeness in argument has been overlooked (18-19): 'The Stranger's use of division has been all too often, and all too quickly, assimilated to mentions of "division" elsewhere in Plato. Yet the bearing of his use of example on the images, analogies, similarities, comparisons of all kinds so prevalent throughout the dialogues has gone relatively unexplored.' On the importance of the Stranger's discussion of *paradeigma* Lane notes (p. 61): 'His analysis (277d-279a) is the longest and most detailed discussion of example as such, or any of its sisters — analogy, image, comparison — in Plato'. The standard study of *paradeigma*, as set out in the *Politicus* and elsewhere, is V. Goldschmidt, *Le Paradigme dans la dialectique Platonicienne*.

ous unlikenesses (ἀνομοιότητος), when they are seen in multitudes, one should be incapable of pulling a face and stopping before one has penned all the related things (σύμπαντα τὰ οἰκεία) within one likeness (ὁμοιότητος) and surrounded them in some real class (tr. Rowe).

The art of weaving wool, which becomes the model for statesmanship, is also presented as a process of combining and dividing. Weaving, obviously, involves combination in the intertwining of woof and warp (explained at 283a). But, perhaps less obviously, weaving also involves division and separation, in the process of carding wool, which (at 281a) is defined as ‘a matter of breaking apart things that are combined, even matted, together’ (‘Τὸ δὲ . . . τῶν συνεστώτων καὶ συμπεπιλημένων διαλυτική’) and (at 282b) is classed with ‘all those activities that put apart from each other things that are together’.¹¹³

Following the model of weaving, the art of statesmanship becomes that of combining and dividing where appropriate (306a ff). After distinguishing ‘moderate’ from ‘courageous’ men and, later, good from bad men, the Stranger says that every kind of expert knowledge will first separate out and discard the bad elements (308c) and then from the good — both ‘like’ and ‘unlike’ (ὁμοίων καὶ ἀνομοίων) — will bring them ‘all together into one’. When this model is applied to statesmanship, the process of good government becomes that of distinguishing bad men from good, discarding the bad (by death, exile, punishment, 309a) and then combining the two different types of good men (moderate and courageous) to form the fabric of society. Thus the ability to recognise likenesses and differences between groups is crucial. Finally, the art of using models in argument becomes that of recognising and pointing up the likenesses and differences between concepts.

At 277d the Stranger admits that he will need a model to explain the nature of models in general and takes up the idea of children learning their letters. This learning process is then shown to depend on the successful recognition of similar elements in different combinations: the children first become familiar with individual letters and then learn to recognise them in longer and more difficult combinations. At 278a-b the Stranger explains the process of learning to read and — simultaneously — how models work in cognition:

Ἄρ’ οὖν οὐχ ᾧδε ῥᾶστον καὶ κάλλιστον ἐπάγειν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὰ μήπω γινωσκόμενα;

Πῶς;

Ἀνάγειν πρῶτον ἐπ’ ἐκεῖνα ἐν οἷς ταῦτά ταῦτα ὀρθῶς ἐδόξαζον, ἀναγαγόντας δὲ τιθέναι παρὰ τὰ μήπω γινωσκόμενα, καὶ παραβάλλοντας ἐνδεικνύναι τὴν αὐτὴν ὁμοιότητα καὶ φύσιν ἐν ἀμφοτέραις οὖσαν ταῖς συμπλοκαῖς, μέχρι περ ἂν πᾶσι τοῖς ἀγνοοῦ-μένοις τὰ

¹¹³ See Lane pp. 54-6 on combining and separating in the Stranger’s account of weaving.

δοξαζόμενα ἀληθῶς παρατιθέμενα δειχθῆ, δειχθέντα δέ, παραδείγματα οὕτω γιγνόμενα, ποιήσῃ τῶν στοιχείων ἕκαστον πάντων ἐν πάσαις ταῖς συλλαβαῖς τὸ μὲν ἕτερον ὡς τῶν ἄλλων ἕτερον ὄν, τὸ δὲ ταὐτὸν ὡς ταὐτὸν αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτά ἐαυτῷ προσαγορεύεσθαι.

Well then, isn't this the easiest and best way of leading them on to the things they're not yet recognizing?

What way?

To take them first back to those cases in which they were getting these same things right, and having done that, to put these beside what they're not yet recognizing, and by comparing them demonstrate that **there is the same kind of thing with similar features in both combinations**, until the things that they are getting right have been shown set beside all the ones that they don't know, and once they have been shown like this, and so become models, they bring it about that each of all the individual letters is called both different, on the basis that it is different from the others, and the same, on the basis that it is always the same as and identical to itself, in all syllables (tr. Rowe).

The act of learning a new word thus becomes the recognition of the same letters when presented in different formations — both when presented individually and in the longer unfamiliar syllables. Thus learning to read is a process of distinguishing like and unlike, as indeed is using models — a point made explicitly by the Stranger at 278c:

Οὐκοῦν τοῦτο μὲν ἱκανῶς συνειλήφαμεν, ὅτι παραδείγματός γ' ἐστὶ τότε γένεσις, ὁπότεν ὄν ταὐτὸν ἐν ἑτέρῳ διεσπασμένῳ δοξαζόμενον ὁρθῶς καὶ συναχθὲν περὶ ἑκάτερον καὶ συνάμφω μίαν ἀληθεῖ δόξαν ἀποτελεῖ;

(Φαίνεται.)

Well then, have we grasped this point adequately, that we come to be using a *model* when being the same thing in something different and distinct, it is correctly identified, and having been brought together with the original thing, it brings about a single true judgement about each separately and both together?

(It seems so) (tr. Rowe).

This passage makes absolutely clear that a model arises when a correct identification and judgement is made about the presence of 'the same thing in something different and distinct'. Indeed for Plato the model *is* the same element that is present in the two different entities. This is important in terms of the debate about the heuristic role of models, for on this conception of a model the process of learning something new can only occur if the same element (ταὐτόν) is objectively present in the two different entities. If the common element is not objectively present, then the process of recognition cannot take place. To use Plato's own example: if the same letter was not present in an unfamiliar, longer combination, then the child would not be able to recognise something familiar, and so would not be able to learn the new, difficult word. So, for

Plato a model works when there is a common element present in two different entities, *x* and *y*, where *x* is an easier and more familiar entity and *y* is a more difficult, unfamiliar entity. The cognitive process in using *y* as a model for *x* is that of making a comparison (τιθέναι παρὰ, παραβάλλοντας, 278a) between *x* and *y*, so that the familiar features of *x* become discernible in the unfamiliar context of *y*. Thus, when weaving (*x*) comes to be used as a model for statesmanship (*y*), this process can only work if there are common elements present — not just hypothesized but objectively there — in both weaving and statesmanship. So this account of models does not take into consideration situations where a familiar *x* is used to try to gain understanding of a radically unknown *y*. For in such a situation there is no guarantee of the presence of a common element. Further, if one already knows that there is a common element between *x* and *y*, then *y* cannot be radically unknown. This means that a model can be demonstrative in the sense of showing up the presence of common elements in *x* and *y*, when one already knows they are present, but not in the sense of proving new propositions about a radically unknown *y*. Thus Plato's account of the functioning of a model is careful and limited in its scope.

At 278c-d when the Stranger applies the model of learning letters to learning about the world, he uses the metaphor of the 'letters and syllables of everything' and again stresses the idea that a model requires the presence of common elements between the familiar and unfamiliar entities (278c-d):

Θαυμάζομεν ἂν οὖν εἰ ταῦτόν τοῦτο ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχὴ φύσει περὶ τὰ τῶν πάντων στοιχεῖα πεπονθυῖα τοτὲ μὲν ὑπ' ἀληθείας περὶ ἓν ἕκαστον ἔν τισι συνίσταται,¹¹⁴ τοτὲ δὲ περὶ ἅπαντα ἐν ἑτέροις αὐτὸ φέρεται, καὶ μὲν αὐτῶν ἀμῆ γέ πη τῶν συγκράσεων ὀρθῶς δοξάζει, μετατιθέμενα δ' εἰς τὰς τῶν πραγμάτων μακρὰς καὶ μὴ βραδίους συλλαβὰς ταῦτά ταῦτα πάλιν ἀγνοεῖ;

Then would we be surprised if our minds by their nature experienced this same thing in relation to the individual letters of everything, now collecting themselves in some cases with the aid of truth in relation to each single thing, now, in other cases, all at sea in relation to all of them, and somehow or other getting the constituents of the combinations themselves right, but once again not knowing these same things when they are transferred into the long syllables of things and the ones that are not easy? (tr. Rowe).

So again the point is made that 'the same things' (ταῦτά) are present in the smaller constituents and in the longer combinations.

Now that it is clear exactly how Plato expects a model to work, the next step is to consider the cognitive claims about the functioning of models made in the *Politicus*.

¹¹⁴ The revised OCT text of the *Polit.* (*Platonis Opera* vol. I), edited by Duke, Hicken, Nicoll, Robinson and Strachan (henceforth: DHNRS) reads at this point: ἔν τισιν ἴσταιται.

The first key statement, as mentioned above in the section on Lloyd, comes at 277d1 as the Stranger declares:

Χαλεπόν, ὦ δαιμόνιε, μὴ παραδείγμασι χρώμενον ἱκανῶς ἐνδείκ-
νυσθαί τι τῶν μειζόνων. κινδυνεύει γάρ ἡμῶν ἕκαστος οἷον ὄναρ εἰδὼς
ἅπαντα πάντ' αὖ πάλιν ὥσπερ ὕπαρ ἀγνοεῖν.

It's a hard thing, my fine friend, to demonstrate [sufficiently] any of the greater subjects without using models. It looks as if each of us knows everything in a kind of dreamlike way, and then again is ignorant of everything as it were when awake (tr. Rowe).

So, it is 'difficult' to demonstrate sufficiently any of the 'greater' subjects (τῶν μειζόνων) without using models. This is the claim that models play an important role in presenting adequate demonstrations of certain subjects. It is not the claim that without models this process is impossible, but merely that without models it is more difficult. It is left unclear what exactly a sufficient demonstration consists of, and there is no statement to the effect that a model on its own can prove the truth. There is a point about knowledge here and this needs to be clarified. There is no explicit link between the first and second sentences. After making the statement about models the Stranger moves to a new idea: it seems that each of us (presumably the 'us' refers to human beings) knows everything but again is ignorant of everything. We know everything 'as a dream' (οἷον ὄναρ) but are ignorant of everything 'as a waking vision/as reality' (ὥσπερ ὕπαρ). This metaphor of dream and waking states for ignorance and knowledge is common in Plato and earlier thought.¹¹⁵ Each of us, then, is ignorant and, although the connection is not made explicit, the train of the Stranger's thought must be: i) certain subjects are difficult to demonstrate without models; ii) these things are difficult to demonstrate because we do not have adequate knowledge of them; and iii) our knowledge of everything is in fact deficient. The move from the statement about models to that of our general poor state of knowledge suggests that models can form part of our attempts to gain knowledge, and this point is made explicit later in the dialogue where again the Stranger uses the dream/waking metaphor (278e). At this point the Stranger justifies their use of the idea of weaving as part of their effort to transform their ignorance into knowledge of the subject of kingship, for they have used weaving (278e9-11):

διὰ παραδείγματος ἐπιχειρεῖν αὖ τὴν τῶν κατὰ πόλιν θεραπείαν τέχνη
γνωρίζειν, ἵνα ὕπαρ ἄντ' ὀνειράτος ἡμῖν γίγνηται

¹¹⁵ References in Plato include: *Symp.* 175e3; *Rep.* 476c8, 476d4, 520c6-7, 533b8-c1 and 534c-d; and *Phdr.* 277e10. The contrast occurs again in *Polit.* at 290b7. For discussion of the motif, see D. Gallop, 'Dreaming and Waking in Plato', pp. 187-201. For earlier uses of the contrast, see *Odyssey* 19. 547 and 20. 90, Pindar, *Olympian* 13.67 and Heraclitus, 22 B 1, 73, and 89 (Diels Kranz (= DK)).

in an attempt once more through the use of a model to recognize in an expert, systematic way what looking after those in the city is, so that it may be present to us in our waking state instead of in a dream (tr. Rowe).

So the model of weaving is being used in the attempt to make kingship present to the interlocutors in a waking rather than a dream state. This is entirely consistent with the idea that models play an important role in helping to demonstrate important subjects, and again, although the goal of the inquiry is to reach knowledge, and although the model will make a great contribution to this, it is not stated that the model on its own will reveal the truth about statesmanship. Notice that the Stranger speaks only of the 'attempt' (ἐπιχειρεῖν) to recognise the nature of political tendance, and that the statement about gaining knowledge comes in a final (ἵνα) rather than a consecutive clause.

The passage at 277d1, then, is significant in that it opens up the idea that models can perform an important function in helping to give demonstrations in the wider attempt to gain knowledge. The particular subjects that are difficult to demonstrate without models are the 'greater' ones. The nature of these is left entirely vague here but later in the dialogue more information is given and a coherent distinction emerges between those subjects which are concrete, corporeal, visible, tangible and less important and those which are abstract, incorporeal, invisible, intangible and more important. The relevant passage comes as the Stranger explains how some things that exist can be easily pointed out — for they are perceptible to the senses — while others can only be shown through discourse for they are without body and it is these that are the 'greatest' things (285d10-286b1):

ἀλλ' οἶμαι τοὺς πλείστους λέληθεν ὅτι τοῖς μὲν τῶν ὄντων ῥαδίως καταμαθεῖν αἰσθηταί τινες ὁμοιότητες πεφύκασιν, ὧς οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν δηλοῦν, ὅταν αὐτῶν τις βουληθῇ τῷ λόγον αἰτοῦντι περὶ τοῦ μὴ μετὰ πραγμάτων ἀλλὰ χωρὶς λόγου ῥαδίως ἐνδείξασθαι· τοῖς δ' αὖ μεγίστοις οὐσι καὶ τιμιωτάτοις οὐκ ἔστιν εἶδωλον οὐδὲν πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους εἰργασμένον ἐναργῶς, οὐδὲν δειχθέντος τὴν τοῦ πυκθάν-ομένου ψυχὴν ὁ βουλόμενος ἀποπληρῶσαι, πρὸς τῶν αἰσθήσεων τινα προσαρμόττων, ἱκανῶς πληρώσει. διὸ δεῖ μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατόν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι· τὰ γὰρ ἀσώματα, κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα, λόγῳ μόνον ἄλλα δὲ οὐδενὶ σαφῶς δείκνυται, τούτων δὲ ἕνεκα πάντ' ἐστὶ τὰ νῦν λεγόμενα. ῥᾶων δ' ἐν τοῖς ἐλάττωσιν ἢ μελέτη παντὸς περὶ μᾶλλον ἢ περὶ τὰ μείζω.

But I think the majority of people don't recognize that to [for] some of the things that are there are certain perceptible likenesses which are there to be easily understood, and which it is not at all hard to point out, when one wants to make an easy demonstration to someone who asks for an account of one of these things which involves no trouble and without recourse to verbal means; conversely, for those things that are greatest and most valuable, there is no image at all which has been worked in plain view for the use of

mankind, the showing of which will enable the person who wants to satisfy the mind of an inquirer to satisfy it adequately by fitting it to one of the senses. That is why one must practise at being able to give and receive an account of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means and by nothing else, and everything that is now being said is for the sake of these things. But practice in everything is easier in smaller things rather than in relation to the greater (tr. Rowe).

So there exist two classes of entities (from now on: type *a* and type *b*). The first type — type *a* — have ‘perceptible likenesses’ (αἰσθηταὶ τινες ὁμοιότητες), which are ‘easily’ (ῥαδίως) understood and ‘not at all hard’ (οὐδὲν χαλεπὸν) to show. When someone wants an account of such an entity (i.e. wants to understand what it is), one can easily (ῥαδίως) make it plain or show it without trouble (μὴ μετὰ πραγμάτων) and without words (χωρὶς λόγου). Such a perceptible object can be shown in visible and concrete form. For example, if a child were to ask ‘what is a cup?’, one could present a cup to her and show how it is used, without having to rely on any words. Similarly one could produce a picture of a cup to show what the name refers to. Conversely, the second type of entity — type *b* — has no ‘image’ (εἰδωλον) which has been ‘manufactured’ (εἰργασμένον) so that it is clearly and plainly (ἐναργῶς) available for human understanding.¹¹⁶ If someone wishes to explain the nature of such an entity, he cannot simply ‘show’ (οὐ δειχθέντος) it by fitting it to one of the senses (πρὸς τῶν αἰσθήσεων τινα προσαρμόττων), that is, by offering it to sight or touch or smell *etc.* Unlike type *a*, this second type of entity cannot be experienced by the senses and thus, unlike type *a*, cannot be revealed without speech. It is this type *b* entity that turns out to be the ‘greatest and most valuable’ (τοῖς δ’ αὖ μεγίστοις οὖσι καὶ τιμιωτάτοις), and so the reference at 277d to the ‘greater’ subjects begins to be explained. The greatest and most valuable entities cannot be experienced directly through the senses and can only be demonstrated through language. Thus the Stranger continues (286a4-7):

διὸ δεῖ μελετᾶν λόγον ἐκάστου δυνατὸν εἶναι δοῦναι καὶ δέξασθαι· τὰ γὰρ ἀσώματα, κάλλιστα ὄντα καὶ μέγιστα, λόγῳ μόνον ἄλλω δὲ οὐδενὶ σαφῶς δείκνυται

¹¹⁶ G.E.L. Owen, ‘Plato on the Undepictable’, pp. 349-61, establishes this reading of the passage, clearing away the confusion that Plato is here using ‘likeness’ and ‘image’ as ‘technical vocabulary of the paradigm-metaphysics’ (p. 354). For an extension and modification of his account, see Lane pp. 70-75. Lane accepts that (p. 74), ‘For the Greeks as for us, weaving is manifestly depictable’ but argues that the notion of weaving within the Stranger’s enquiry proves to be ‘crucially ambiguous’ (p. 72). For Lane it is this ambiguous status of weaving that accounts for the development of thought in this section of the dialogue (see esp. p. 74).

That is why one must practise at being able to give and receive an account of each thing; for the things that are without body, which are finest and greatest, are shown clearly only by verbal means and by nothing else (tr. Rowe).¹¹⁷

This passage gives more information on the nature of the ‘greatest’ subjects (here also described as the ‘finest’ (κάλλιστα)), since now the Stranger defines them as ‘the things that are without body’ — ἀσώματα. This is entirely consistent with the idea that unlike type *a*, type *b* entities are not available to the senses. What exactly are these things ‘without body’? No answer is given in the work and clearly the term could refer to very different classes of things — such as, the gods, souls, the Forms and any abstract or conceptual subject, such as statesmanship. When the Stranger goes on to say that ‘everything that is now being said is for the sake of these things’, there is perhaps a clue that in the present context the relevant incorporeal entity is that of statesmanship and related concepts, the central concerns of the dialogue. So, there is a clear antithesis emerging between entities of type *a* and *b*:

type *a*:

perceptible to the senses;

corporeal;

easy to show;

can be shown without language;

less important

type *b*:

not perceptible to the senses;

incorporeal;

difficult to show;

can only be shown in language;

most important (greatest, most valuable, finest).

In the course of the *Politicus* the idea of subjects of more or less importance is expressed through the language of size: the most important subjects are the ‘biggest’ ones, the less important the ‘smaller’ ones.¹¹⁸ Further, this idea of big and small comes to be linked with that of longer and shorter combinations — in the model of children learning to read¹¹⁹ and in the later development of the idea of the ‘letters and syllables of things’. That which is smallest and shortest is easiest and least important, while that which is bigger and longer is most difficult and most important. The relevant size terms are to be found at: 277d2 (‘bigger’, μείζονων); 277e6-7 (‘shortest and easiest’ syllables, ταῖς βραχυτάταις καὶ ῥάσταις); 278d5 (‘long and hard’ syllables, τὰς . . . μακρὰς καὶ μὴ ῥαδίους); 278e6-7 (a ‘small’ model, σμικρῷ . . . παραδείγματι); 278e8 (the case of the king is the ‘biggest’, μέγιστον, and is to be illuminated through

¹¹⁷ On this passage and its relation to *Soph.* 218d, see Lane p. 73.

¹¹⁸ Lane observes that the language of size is also used in the *Soph.* and comments on the passage at 218d8-9 (p. 22, n. 20): ‘I translate *smikron* as “minor” rather than the usual “small”: what is meant is not that angling and sophistry differ in size, whatever that would mean, but in importance and difficulty for purposes of definition.’ On the language of size in *Polit.*, see Lane p. 61.

¹¹⁹ On this model of children learning to read by identifying shorter and longer syllables in words, see Lane pp. 62-70. As she correctly points out, this model shows how the ‘remedy of example’ works through ‘a dynamic method of comparison’ (p. 63).

comparison with 'smaller' things, ἐλαττόνων); 279a8 weaving turns out to be 'very small' (σμικρότατον) and at 286a6 the incorporeal entities are the 'biggest' (μέγιστα). This is an entirely consistent picture and one that fits with the idea of entities of type *a* and *b*. For in the learning of letters that which is smaller and shorter (a single letter or a short syllable) is used to promote understanding of what is longer and more difficult (longer words). In the use of models a more familiar, easier subject is classified as 'smaller', and this is used to promote understanding of a less familiar and more difficult subject, which is classified as 'bigger'. Thus the 'very small' example of weaving will be used to promote understanding of the 'very big' concept of statesmanship. Just as the smaller (shorter) syllables were easier to understand than the bigger (longer) ones, so the smaller (familiar) subject of weaving is supposed to be easier to understand than the bigger (less familiar) subject of kingship. Thus, as he approaches the task of using the model of weaving to illuminate kingship, the Stranger observes (286b), 'But practice in everything is easier in smaller things rather than in relation to the greater'. Equally, weaving can be seen as fitting in with type *a* entities in that — if we think of a piece of woven cloth or the physical processes of weaving — it is perceptible to the senses, corporeal, easy to show, able to be shown without language and less important in human life. In the same way the art of statesmanship fits in with type *b*, in that, as an abstract concept, it is not perceptible to the senses, is incorporeal, difficult to show (witness this dialogue), can only be shown in language and is most important, valuable *etc.* in human life. So Plato has fused the language of importance and familiarity with that of size and corporeality, and the use of language and models is explained in terms of a set of antitheses: less/most important; small/big and corporeal/incorporeal.

In terms of the scheme established in the *Politicus* there is a clear dichotomy between everyday, familiar, concrete objects and difficult, abstract concepts and this dichotomy provides the framework for various statements on language and art/crafts. For, on the one hand, those who are less intelligent are concerned about everyday objects which can be demonstrated to the senses, while the more intelligent are concerned with abstract, conceptual matters that rely on language. For example, at one point the Stranger makes what seems to be an odd comment on art and speech, linking verbal demonstrations with 'those who are able to follow' and demonstrations through art/craft with 'the rest' — who presumably are not able to 'follow' (277c3-6):

γραφῆς δὲ καὶ συμπάσης χειρουργίας λέξει καὶ λόγῳ δηλοῦν πᾶν ζῷον μᾶλλον πρέπει τοῖς δυναμένοις ἔπεσθαι· τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις διὰ χειρουργίων.

But it is not painting or any other kind of handicraft, but speech and discourse, which constitute the more fitting medium for exhibiting every kind of living creature, for those who are able to follow; for the rest it will be through handicrafts (tr. Rowe).

Young Socrates dismisses this remark and moves swiftly on, and indeed it is not until later in the dialogue, once the scheme set out above is in place, that the relevance of this point emerges for the reader.¹²⁰ So, there are two types of demonstration fit for two levels of ability: demonstration in speech and discourse for the intelligent, and demonstration in painting and handicrafts for the less intelligent. Once in the realm of speech and discourse, however, there is still a new distinction to be made, which is important for the understanding of Plato's views on models. For while ordinary speech and discourse is adequate for explaining many subjects, there are still those which require something more: as the Stranger himself says at 277d1, 'It is a hard thing to demonstrate any of the greater subjects without using models'. There are, then, three levels of demonstration: through painting/handicrafts; through discourse; and through models in speech. It is thus perhaps a typical Platonic irony that models and images in speech themselves come to be spoken of as paintings and artistic objects.

What does all this amount to in terms of establishing a Platonic view on models? First, they are a developed form of language use, whose help is required to explain the 'greater' subjects, which turn out to be incorporeal and conceptual. Second, they can work only when there is the presence of a common element between the familiar *x* and the unfamiliar *y* which it is used to illustrate or explain (for example, where the same letter is present in a shorter and longer combination). Thus the decision to use weaving as a model for statesmanship implies that it is already known that the same processes are present in both. For if there were not a common element, then on Plato's model for model use (learning letters), there would simply be no way for understanding to be gained. Therefore when it is claimed that Plato in the *Politicus* sees models as heuristic and not just didactic, it must be clarified that the model in question (weaving) is 'heuristic' in a limited sense. The model does not cast up pro-positions and perspectives out of the blue but serves to impose a structure on a concept with which — it is implied — it has common elements. On Plato's own account of models these are not simply features that are similar but actually the same. Therefore decisions about the nature of statesmanship are made in the dialogue at the very point where the Stranger introduces weaving, even before the model of weaving is worked out. Unless he is sure that there are common features between the two, then, according to his own account, the Stranger has no right to suggest that weaving can be a model for statesmanship. So the model of weaving is not heuristic in the sense of providing propositions and hypotheses about something radically unknown, but may perhaps be termed 'heuristic' in that it establishes a clear structure for understanding statesmanship through the perception and working out of common elements. Working out how many and what exactly the common elements are between weaving and statesmanship becomes a means of clarifying the concept of statesmanship. The use of the model serves to highlight what is and is not common between the two; in other words, how the two are alike and different. In Lane's words, 'Example reveals what is common, a matter of self-same

¹²⁰ See Owen's explanation in 'Plato on the Undepictable'.

identity, and what is different and so achieves a clarification of each entity being compared (p. 69).¹²¹ It is by this clarification of likeness and difference that the interlocutors are able to differentiate statesmanship from the other arts that lay claim to the title. Thus there is the emphatic statement at 279a1-6:

Then we must take up once again what we were saying before, to the effect that since tens of thousands of people dispute the role of caring for cities with the kingly class, what we have to do is to separate all these off and leave the king on his own (δεῖ δὴ πάντας ἀποχωρίζειν τούτους καὶ μόνον ἐκεῖνον λείπειν); and it was just for this purpose that we said we needed a model (καὶ πρὸς τοῦτο δὴ παραδείγματος ἔφαμεν δεῖν τινος ἡμῖν).

Very much so (Καὶ μάλα) (tr. Rowe).

Therefore the model is regarded as a device which is able to 'separate off' the king from all the other claimants to the art of caring for cities, and is thus defined as a means of establishing distinctions.

It is notable that in the discussion of the nature and function of models in the *Politicus* there is no discussion of their truth status. It is also notable that whenever the function of the model is alluded to, the language is that of opinion, judgement and discovery rather than that of knowledge, truth and proof. There is much talk of 'showing' and 'revealing' but this does not necessarily refer to proof: at 277d1-2 it is χαλεπὸν . . . ἱκανῶς ἐνδείκνυσθαι ('difficult to demonstrate sufficiently') any of the greater subjects without models; at 278a-b in the model of letters, the teacher leads the children on to understanding by comparing (παραβάλλοντας) different syllables and thus 'showing' (ἐνδεικνύοναι) the common elements; at 278c the use of a model is defined as that of correctly judging (δοξαζόμενον ὀρθῶς) the same thing to be present in something different and distinct, so that it 'brings about a single true'¹²² judgement' (μίαν ἀληθὴ δόξαν ἀποτελεῖ); and at 278e in the reference to dream and waking states, although the model is being used in an attempt to reach knowledge and truth, it is not stated that the model can achieve this on its own, but rather it is conceived as part of an on-going process. Further, the Stranger speaks of the model as a means of discovering not the 'truth' but 'what is sought' (279a7-b1):

Τί δῆτα παράδειγμά τις ἂν, ἔχον τὴν αὐτὴν πολιτικὴν πραγματείαν, σμικρότατον παραθέμενος ἱκανῶς ἂν εὔροι τὸ ζητούμενον;

So what model, occupied in the same activities as statesmanship, on a very small scale, could one compare with it, and so discover in a satisfactory way what we are looking for? (tr. Rowe)

¹²¹ I fully support Lane's argument that in this dialogue 'division and example work in concert' and that 'combined, they work to establish and clarify genuine differences and identities as relevant to the pursuit of overall inquiry' (p. 67).

¹²² Note that the only 'truth' word appears alongside δόξα.

And finally, at 279b4-6 the model of weaving is described in a legal metaphor not as offering proof but as offering the ‘witness’ that is ‘wanted’:

By Zeus, Socrates, if we don’t have anything else to hand, well, there is weaving — do you want us to choose that? Not all of it, if you agree, since perhaps the weaving of cloth from wool will suffice; maybe it is this part of it, if we choose it, which would provide the testimony we want (τάχα γὰρ ἂν ἡμῖν καὶ τοῦτο τὸ μέρος αὐτῆς μαρτυρήσειε προαιρεθὲν ὃ βουλόμεθα) (tr. Rowe).

Note also the hesitation in τάχα: *perhaps* the model will provide the witness they want. This passage offers the image of a lawsuit, where the interlocutors bring in the model of weaving as a witness to support their case. This image does not allow the interlocutors to be a jury listening to a case being set before them, for it is one of them that brings in the witness. Thus the model of weaving is not being judged as giving proof but as lending a supporting voice to the case that is being made by the Stranger: that statesmanship has certain elements in common with weaving. Whatever else is going on here, it cannot be claimed that Plato is maintaining that a model is sufficient to prove the truth on its own. Rather, models are presented as a useful cognitive tool in furthering exploration and discovery of the nature of difficult concepts by means of the identification and analysis of likeness and difference. To conclude this section: from the account of the *Politicus* it emerges that a model is like an image in that it relies on a comparison and that ultimately it offers a second-best account. For when a model *x* is used for *y*, it is part of a process of discovery, and when that process is complete, then *y* can be set forth without the model. In terms of the *Politicus* the present state of the interlocutors’ knowledge of statesmanship requires them to use the model of weaving to clarify the concept. But once this has been clarified, then, presumably, they would be able to offer a direct account of statesmanship without having to make the comparison with weaving. Just as in the case of children learning their letters: they require a model when they do not know the difficult, longer word, but once they know it they can dispense with the model.

At the start of this section the question was posed as to whether models in the *Politicus* are demonstrative or merely suggestive. After studying the text, it seems fair to conclude that there is no claim here that models are able to demonstrate the truth. Therefore it would seem most accurate to say that in the *Politicus* Plato views models as heuristic devices in that they are able to clarify aspects of the subject under debate and to provide a means of moving from simple to more complex entities in a preliminary way. So the evidence of this dialogue does not support Lloyd’s comments that in certain contexts Plato recommended the use of likenesses in order to ‘intuit’, ‘reveal’ or to ‘discover’ the truth (*PA*, pp. 394-5 and 402). For, although providing intuitions of the truth and ultimately attaining the truth itself is the end to which the models and likenesses are employed, there are no statements which claim that, in and of themselves, likenesses or models can be used to express or ‘reveal’ the truth directly — regardless of Plato’s actual practice.

Although the account in the *Politicus* reveals that Plato saw models as extremely useful cognitive tools, he does not suggest that the use of models on their own can offer any kind of short-cut to knowledge and truth. Rather they are a means of furthering inquiry, and once a conclusion can be reached and the truth attained (by a variety of means), the model can be dispensed with. Therefore, like images, they remain a second best. Plato is always conscious of the gulf between image and reality and always voices a preference for what is primary, real and true over what is merely secondary, derived and based on a likeness. Throughout, Plato is careful to distinguish direct accounts of reality from accounts involving images or likenesses of it, and images are for him at best a heuristic device, able to offer an indirect access to truth if used in the correct way — namely, as preliminary steps in an inquiry. This is very important, for if Plato had expressed the claim that where literal discourse fails, images can reveal the truth directly, he would have been voicing the epistemic thesis whereby images, models and metaphors are regarded as offering a unique epistemic access to the truth, an access which cannot be attained through other, more direct means. Although Plato undoubtedly recognised the power of images, he did not develop the epistemic thesis in his statements and theories on the cognitive role of likenesses.

A final point on Plato's view of the cognitive role of εἰκόνες concerns rhetoric. For various passages show that Plato was well aware of the great rhetorical force of images, as, for example, in the *Gorgias* where Socrates refers to images as a means of persuasion. At 493b Socrates presents the image of the appetitive part of the soul as a leaky jar and afterwards asks Callicles: 'But now do I persuade you at all to change your mind, and agree that the orderly are happier than the intemperate?' (tr. Irwin). Callicles indicates that it will take more than this to change his mind and so Socrates presses on, introducing a new image with the words (493d5): Φέρε δὴ, ἄλλην σοι εἰκόνα λέγω ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου τῇ νῦν ('Come on then, I'll tell you another comparison, from the same school as that one', tr. Irwin). When he has finished this second comparison (of the temperate life as that of a man possessing sound jars and the undisciplined life as that of a man who must constantly strive to replenish his perforated jars), he again asks Callicles (494a): 'When I tell you this, do I persuade you at all to concede that the orderly life is better than the intemperate, or don't I persuade you?' (tr. Irwin). Callicles is not won over by Socrates' εἰκόνες but it is clear from Socrates' words that he intends them to be persuasive and is attempting to harness the rhetorical force of imagery to win over his interlocutor. Thus, although Plato does not comment explicitly on the rhetorical potential of imagery, he was certainly aware of it, as such comments and the wealth of imagery in the dialogues show.

For Plato, then, verbal images are part of a much wider class of likenesses, copies, imitations and representations, and his views on verbal εἰκόνες are affected by his overwhelming concern to differentiate image and reality. Images are like their originals in some respects but are always to be regarded as inferior to them. In Plato's view, images will always be less real or less true than the objects which cast them or which

they attempt to represent. The evidence from the dialogues relating to the cognitive role of verbal images can be summed up as follows:

- (1) images are a means of illustrating and clarifying certain points;¹²³
- (2) they can serve as heuristic as well as didactic devices (where 'heuristic' means helping discovery by suggesting hypotheses through the adoption of different perspectives);
- (3) have great rhetorical potential;

but

- (4) are inferior to truth and reality and to direct accounts of truth and reality;

and

- (5) may be deceptive and, unlike proofs and demonstrations, cannot provide a reliable basis for argument.

The next step in this study is to discuss whether Plato holds these same views on images in the specific contexts of discourse about the gods and the soul.

IV. Plato on Theological Discourse and Images of Gods

It is necessary to assess Plato's comments on the cognitive role of images of the gods in the context of his views on the nature of human understanding of the gods. For if, as certain comments indicate, Plato believes that human beings cannot have knowledge of gods, then what possible purpose could he see in making up images for gods? Can images of the gods play any meaningful role in discourse, if the nature of the gods lies far beyond the knowledge of men? The solution that emerges from the dialogues is that, despite man's fundamental ignorance in this area, images for the gods have a useful — but necessarily limited — role to play in expressing beliefs about the gods and in exploring the nature of divinity through different perspectives.

1. 'Of the gods we know nothing'

In passages in the *Cratylus* and *Phaedrus* Plato expresses the view that human beings cannot understand the nature of the gods. In the *Cratylus* the interlocutors discuss the issue of names and at 396a-d Socrates offers an explanation of the name 'Zeus'. A little later Hermogenes asks if Socrates has any such explanations of the names of other gods and Socrates replies (400d6-9):

Ναὶ μὰ Δία ἡμεῖς γε, ὦ Ἑρμόγενης, εἶπερ γε νοῦν ἔχοιμεν,¹²⁴ ἓνα μὲν τὸν κάλλιστον τρόπον, ὅτι περὶ θεῶν οὐδὲν ἴσμεν, οὔτε περὶ αὐτῶν οὔτε περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων, ἅττα ποτὲ ἑαυτοῦς¹²⁵ καλοῦσιν·

¹²³ See e.g. *Rep.* 368d; *Soph.* 218c-d; *Polit.* 277d; *Crit.* 107b and *Laws* 644c.

Yes, indeed, Hermogenes, and there is one excellent principle which, as men of sense, we must acknowledge — that of the gods we know nothing, either of their natures or of the names which they give themselves (tr. Jowett).

Before beginning his account of the names of other gods, Socrates stresses that it will necessarily be limited in its scope (401a1-5):

εἰ οὖν βούλει, σκοπῶμεν¹²⁶ ὥσπερ προειπόντες τοῖς θεοῖς ὅτι περὶ αὐτῶν οὐδὲν ἡμεῖς σκεψόμεθα — οὐ γὰρ ἀξιούμεν οἰοί τ' ἂν εἶναι σκοπεῖν — ἀλλὰ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, ἣν ποτὲ τινα δόξαν ἔχοντες ἐτίθεντο αὐτοῖς τὰ ὀνόματα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἀνεμέσσητον.

Let us then, if you please, in the first place tell them that we are not inquiring about them — we do not presume we are able to do so. But we are inquiring about the meaning of men in giving them these names — in this there can be small blame (tr. Jowett).

Thus Socrates states quite clearly that human beings know nothing of the gods and would be blameworthy if they believed that they were able even to enquire about them, let alone proclaim any knowledge. Later in the *Cratylus* Socrates reiterates the point that human beings do not have knowledge of the gods (425c1-3): προειπόντες, ὥσπερ ὀλίγον πρότερον τοῖς θεοῖς, ὅτι οὐδὲν εἰδότες τῆς ἀληθείας τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων δόγματα περὶ αὐτῶν εἰκάζομεν ('saying by way of preface, as I said before of the gods, that of the truth about them we know nothing, and do but entertain human notions of them', tr. Jowett). Creating a distinction between knowledge and truth on the one hand (εἰδότες, τῆς ἀληθείας) and opinion and guesswork on the other (δόγματα, εἰκάζομεν, lit: infer from comparison, form a conjecture, make a guess about), Socrates expresses the view that, since human beings are unable to know the truth about the gods, they merely formulate opinions based on guesswork and conjecture.

The subject of human understanding of divine nature is touched on in the *Phaedrus* (246c) where it is said that, although we humans have not seen and do not have sufficient knowledge of a god, nevertheless we fashion our own image of the divine based on familiar human characteristics. In this passage Socrates tells how the perfect soul is winged and journeys on high whereas the soul that has lost its wings sinks down and fastens onto an earthly body. After observing that this composite structure of soul and body is termed 'mortal' (246c), he addresses the question of what an immortal being is (246c6-d2):

ἀθάνατον δὲ οὐδ' ἐξ ἑνὸς λόγου λελογισμένου, ἀλλὰ πλάττομεν οὔτε ἰδόντες οὔτε ἱκανῶς νοήσαντες θεὸν ἀθάνατόν τι ζῶον, ἔχον μὲν ψυχὴν, ἔχον δὲ σῶμα, τὸν αἰὲ δὲ χρόνον ταῦτα συμπεφυκότα.

¹²⁴ DHNRS: ἔχομεν.

¹²⁵ DHNRS: αὐτοὶ ἑαυτούς.

¹²⁶ DHRNS: βούλει οὖν σκοπῶμεν.

'immortal' is a term applied on no basis of reasoned argument at all, but our fancy pictures the god whom we have never seen, nor fully conceived, as an immortal living being, possessed of a soul and body united for all time (tr. Hackforth).

So it is claimed that the term 'immortal' is used with no rational account of the nature of immortal beings and that people simply imagine the nature of God in terms of their own experience of what it is to be a living being. Hackforth translates the verb *πλάττομεν* as 'our fancy pictures', highlighting the verb's senses of 'forming in the mind' and 'making up, fabricating' (LSJ). But the primary sense of the verb is 'to form, mould, shape', which, according to LSJ, is 'properly used of the artist who works in soft substances such as earth, clay and wax'. Following this primary sense the translation becomes 'moulding, shaping a god', which offers the important image of human beings moulding a god as artists fashioning clay. This artistic image used in the context of knowledge of the divine will be discussed later but for the moment the essential point is that, as in previous passages, human understanding of the divine is presented as limited to guesswork and imagination. There is, then, an agnostic strain in the dialogues but alongside this there are various statements where certain 'truths' about the gods are regarded as established or are simply taken for granted. Thus the commentator faces the question of how to reconcile these conflicting positions.

In the *Apology* Socrates states that it would not be right (*θέμις*) for the god of the oracle to lie (21b), and that it is a truth (*ἀληθές*) that the fortunes of a good man are not a matter of indifference to the gods (41c). Throughout his speech Socrates maintains that in avoiding disobedience to the oracle he is avoiding something bad — a point which entails not only the knowledge that it is wrong to disobey a superior (29b) but also knowledge that the god of the oracle is a superior.¹²⁷

In *Republic* II Socrates criticises the portrayal of the gods in poetry, arguing that most of the stories told to children misrepresent the gods and so ought to be banished from the ideal state. In the course of this criticism Socrates establishes a number of points about the divine nature. First he elicits the response from Adeimantus that God is good (379b1-2): *Οὐκοῦν ἀγαθὸς ὁ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι τε καὶ λεκτέον οὕτω; Τί μῃν;* ('Well, isn't God good, in fact, and shouldn't he be described as such?' 'Of course', tr. Waterfield). From this premise he goes on to argue that, as goodness cannot be the cause of evil, God is the cause only of what is good. This point is then established at 380c as one of the laws to which speakers and poets will be required to conform.

Socrates' next argument in book II concerns the question of whether God changes his shape. After pointing out that God cannot change for the better, since he already is in the best possible state, and that as a perfect being he would not wish to change for

¹²⁷ See M.C. Stokes, 'Socrates' mission', pp. 70-3.

the worse, he concludes that it is impossible for a god to wish to change himself and that each of the gods remains forever in his own form (381c).

Socrates' final criticism of the poets in this section of *Republic* deals with the question of whether a god would wish to deceive. At 382c he states that 'essential falsehood' is hated by both gods and men, and then considers whether falsehood could ever be useful to God. Would God lie because of ignorance, or fear of enemies, or because of the folly or madness of his friends? When Adeimantus rejects each of these propositions, Socrates concludes (382e), 'So God has no reason to lie' and (382e6): Πάντη ἄρα ἀψευδὲς τὸ δαιμόνιον τε καὶ τὸ θεῖον ('So it is not in the nature of deities or gods to deceive', tr. Waterfield). In these passages of the *Apology* and *Republic* particular information about God or the gods¹²⁸ is accepted or presented as true:

- (1) God is good;
- (2) God is the cause only of good;
- (3) gods do not change shape and remain forever in their own form;
- (4) gods are free from falsehood;
- (5) gods are not indifferent to the fortunes of a good man;
- (6) Apollo is a superior being to Socrates.

The expression or tacit assumption of such views sits uneasily with the agnostic strain of thought witnessed earlier in the *Cratylus* and *Phaedrus*. Even if the evidence of the *Apology* is dismissed as representing the views of Socrates rather than Plato, the conclusions reached in *Republic* II remain. It is difficult to reconcile assertions such as 'God is the cause only of good' with the statement that 'of the gods we know nothing', and it seems that a thorny question must be faced: did Plato consider the conclusions of dialectical argument as knowledge? If the answer is 'yes', then Plato could have viewed the conclusions of *Republic* II as knowledge of the gods. But if the answer is 'not necessarily', then Plato could reach certain conclusions about the gods without believing that these represented knowledge of the divine nature. It is undoubtedly significant that the key point of the argument in Book II — that the gods are good — is not simply stated by Socrates but is established dialectically: Socrates elicits Adeimantus' view and this becomes axiomatic for the rest of the argument. In the light of this dialectical manoeuvre it would be wrong to claim that Plato is presenting these statements about the gods as proven truth. Plato does not claim knowledge of the gods.

¹²⁸ I follow Grube's view that there is no significant difference between Plato's references at certain times to a singular God and at other times to plural gods (*Plato's Republic*, pp. 47-8, note 13): 'It should be noted that throughout the *Rep.*, as indeed elsewhere, Plato uses the singular *theos* and the plural *theoi* quite indifferently, a god, gods, or the gods. He even uses the singular with the article, the god. This, however, is the generic use of the article and does not refer to any particular god unless the context makes this obvious. It certainly does not imply any kind of monotheism, as a modern reader might think. All these expressions are equivalent, and refer to the gods or the divine nature generally.' See also Waterfield's note on *Rep.* 379a.

Rather it seems that he held certain opinions about the gods which he continued to examine in various arguments such as those in *Republic II*. Thus in order to determine Plato's view of theological discourse and its potential, the critic must bear in mind not only the different arguments and assertions about the gods which appear in certain dialogues, but also the agnostic strain of thought which is present in others. Although the issue of knowledge of the gods is not treated in a systematic argument anywhere in the dialogues, it remains crucial first that Plato nowhere claims to have achieved such knowledge and second that at times he expresses the view that such knowledge cannot be achieved by human beings. These two points suggest that Plato viewed his own propositions about the gods as opinions or simply conjecture to be tested in various ways, rather than as established knowledge. Indeed it seems that Plato was sceptical that such knowledge could ever be attained. However, despite this scepticism, the gods and divine activity are often discussed in the dialogues and most of these discussions rely on the use of imagery. Thus the next pressing question is: what was Plato's own attitude to his own metaphors and images of gods?

2. 'A dim and deceptive outline'

Does Plato express any views about verbal images of the gods? Does he ever confide in his audience what he expects such images to achieve in discourse? Although the matter is not discussed in any extensive fashion, there are three passages which shed light on Plato's views about the role of divine images: *Republic* 377d-79b, *Laws* 905e-906e and *Critias* 107a-d.

At *Republic* 377b-c, as discussed above, Socrates proposes a censorship on stories and fables about the gods, arguing that many of those currently told to children would have to be rejected from an ideal state. The reason for this is that in his opinion many of these stories, including those told by Homer and Hesiod, are false. When Adeimantus asks what Socrates objects to in these stories, he replies (377d8-9): "Οπερ, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, χρη καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα μέμψεσθαι, ἄλλως τε καὶ ἐάν τις μὴ καλῶς ψεύδεται ('There is no defect which one ought to condemn more quickly and more thoroughly,' I replied, 'especially if the lies have no redeeming feature', tr. Waterfield). Prompted again as to what exactly this fault is, Socrates explains (377e1-3):

“Ὅταν εἰκάζῃ τις κακῶς [οὐσίαν] τῷ λόγῳ, περὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἡρώων οἳ εἰσιν, ὥσπερ γραφεὺς μηδὲν εἰκότα γράφων οἷς ἂν ὁμοία βουλευθῇ γράψαι.

Using the written word to give a distorted image of the nature of the gods and heroes, just as a painter might produce a portrait which completely fails to capture the likeness of the original (tr. Waterfield).

Socrates presents the view that when the poet tells a story of the gods he is creating images (εἰκάζει) of them in his speech (τῷ λόγῳ); such images can be badly produced

(κακῶς), just as a painter's images can simply bear little resemblance to his models. Regardless of the painter's actual success, he nevertheless *attempts* throughout to make his images true likenesses of their models and, presumably, believes he has some chance of achieving this. But how can the poet achieve true likenesses of the gods in his work when, as a mere mortal, he does not know the nature of the gods?

At 379a, as shown above, Socrates asks Adeimantus whether God is good and whether he is always to be spoken of as such. Once Adeimantus replies 'Of course', this view is taken as true for the rest of the debate. This does not, of course, mean that it is true, nor that Plato necessarily believed it to be true. However, in the dialogue this proposition is accepted and Socrates argues that images of the gods ought to reflect divine goodness. Thus when Socrates asserts (*Republic* 379a7-9): οἷος τυγχάνει ὁ θεὸς ὧν, αἰεὶ δῆπου ἀποδοτέον, ἐάντε τις αὐτὸν ἐν ἔπεσιν ποιῇ ἐάντε ἐν μέλεσιν ἐάντε ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ ('Whatever the type of poetry — epic, lyric, or tragic — God must of course always be portrayed as he really is', tr. Waterfield), his remark is based on his conviction that God is good.¹²⁹ Socrates' criticism of the poets rests on their portrayal of the gods as wrongdoers. Since the gods are good, such images cannot be said to resemble their model, and so the poets prove to be bad artists. Images of the gods, then, are to be judged as bad if they portray the gods as evil, and an image of a virtuous god is regarded as bearing a much greater resemblance to its model than an image of an evil god.

A passage from the *Laws* provides a second insight into Plato's views on verbal images of the gods, and here again it emerges that the creation of images is based not on knowledge but simply beliefs about the divine nature. The Athenian and Clinias are discussing whether the gods can be bribed by gifts from men. The Athenian asks what sort of beings the gods would have to be to accept bribes (905e) and starts to deduce what sort of nature they must have (905e2-3): ἀρχοντας μὲν ἀναγκαῖόν που γίγνεσθαι τοὺς γε διοικήσοντας τὸν ἅπαντα ἐντελεχῶς οὐρανόν ('Well, if they are going to run the entire universe for ever, presumably they'll have to be rulers', tr. Saunders). The Athenian reasons from a premise that is not discussed or proven but is simply accepted as a standard belief: the gods run the universe. The Athenian's next step is to try to specify what sort of rulers the gods are, a move he makes by reference to human rulers (905e5):

Ἄλλ' ἄρα τίσιν προσφερεῖς τῶν ἀρχόντων; ἢ τίνες τούτοις, ὧν δυνατὸν ἡμῖν ἀπεικάζουσι τυγχάνειν μείζουσιν ἐλάττονας;

Now then, what sort of ruler do the gods in fact resemble? Or rather, what rulers resemble them? Let's compare small instances with great and see what rulers will serve our purpose (tr. Saunders).

¹²⁹ For the same point about the goodness of God, see *Tim.* 29e, and on the justice of God, see *Theaet.* 176c.

He goes on to suggest a series of different types of rulers: charioteers, steersmen, army commanders, doctors, farmers and shepherds. These are considered as possible images for the gods, and it is noteworthy that three of the images presented here — governors, steersmen and shepherds — are developed in detail in various other dialogues, as Chapters 3 and 4 will show. Thus metaphors and images of the gods as rulers arise from the belief that the gods control the universe.

As the passage at *Laws* 905e progresses, the different images of the gods are tested for their appropriateness, and in each case the standard is not simply whether they reflect the idea of governorship itself but whether they reflect *good* governorship (905e-906e). Accordingly, when it is suggested at 906e that the gods may be like corrupt charioteers, the image (εἰκόνα) is judged by Clinias to be ‘scandalous’ (δεινήν) (906e8). In the language of *Republic* II the speaker here has created a bad image (κακῶς εἰκάζη), which does not resemble its model in vital respects.

In both passages at *Republic* II and *Laws* X the verbs εἰκάζω and ἀπεικάζω are used for the creation of verbal images and the noun εἰκὼν for the created image of the gods. As was established in the first part of this chapter, these terms are also used by Plato of artistic images, of painting and sculptures *etc.* The use of these common terms for both verbal and visual/artistic images creates a link between the two types of images, which is further strengthened by Plato’s explicit comparison of the two. In the *Republic* the poet producing images of the gods in words is likened to a painter making portraits, and in the *Politicus* (297e) the act of producing verbal images (τὰς εἰκόνας) is likened to the process of fashioning clay into a particular shape (τι σχῆμα ἐν τούτοις αὐτοῖς πλασάμενοι). But as well as comparing these two different types of images (visual and verbal), Plato also presents discourse itself as a work of art and the act of producing a verbal account as that of producing a visible work of art. In the *Politicus* the Stranger compares himself and Young Socrates to sculptors as they attempt to hurry their discussion and so cause themselves to lose time with it (277a): ‘but just as sculptors (καθάπερ ἀνδριαντοποιοί) sometimes hurry when it is not appropriate to do so and actually lose time by making additions and increasing the size of various parts of their work beyond what is necessary, so too in our case . . .’ (tr. Rowe). Shortly after this the Stranger again compares their account to a work of art, this time to a portrait (277b): ‘thus we have made our exposition longer, and have in every way failed to apply a finish to our story, and our account, just like a portrait (ὥσπερ ζῶον), seems adequate in terms of its superficial outline, but not yet to have received its proper clarity, as it were with paints and the mixing together of colours’ (tr. Rowe). The comparison of a verbal account to a visual work of art¹³⁰ appears again

¹³⁰ The comparison between verbal accounts and visual works of art is subsequently left aside in the *Polit.*, as the Stranger stresses that there are important differences between discourse and art (277c): γραφῆς δὲ καὶ συμπάσης χειρουργίας λέξει καὶ λόγῳ δηλοῦν πᾶν ζῶον μᾶλλον πρέπει τοῖς δυναμένοις ἐπεσθαι τοῖς δ’ ἄλλοις διὰ χειρουργῶν. (But it is not painting or any other kind of handicraft, but speech and discourse, which consti-

in both the *Republic* and *Laws*. At *Republic* 488a creating a comparison in speech is likened to painting a picture (οἷον οἱ γραφῆς τραγελάφους καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μειγνύντες γράφουσιν) and at 588b-d creating an image in speech becomes the act of modelling a particular visual image (Εἰκόνα πλάσαντες τῆς ψυχῆς λόγῳ), the speaker becomes the 'skilful artist' (Δεινοῦ πλάστου . . . τὸ ἔργον) and speech is spoken of as the artist's material (ὁμῶς δέ, ἐπειδὴ εὐπλαστότερον κηροῦ . . . λόγος, πεπλάσθω). At *Laws* 898b the creators of a verbal comparison are spoken of as craftsmen, while the comparison itself becomes a physical representation (οὐκ ἂν ποτε φανεῖμεν φαῦλοι δημιουργοὶ λόγῳ καλῶν εἰκόνων). The idea also appears in the *Critias* where discourses about the gods are likened to painters' portraits of them. This passage is very interesting for the debate about theological images as it offers a suggestion of how Plato might have expected an audience to respond to verbal images of the gods.

In the opening speech of the dialogue *Critias* congratulates Timaeus on his excellent account of the creation of the universe, but says that his own theme, an account of the struggle between Athens and Atlantis, will be more difficult to present and will require more allowances from the audience (107a). Clearly there is a strong element of irony here (as Critias takes a sly swipe at his friend's huge achievement in his account of creation and as Plato mocks his own effort in the *Timaeus*), but the reasons Critias gives for this view are illuminating for the study of the role of verbal images for the gods. Critias delivers the important point when he says (107a7-b4):

περὶ θεῶν γάρ, ὦ Τίμαιε, λέγοντά τι πρὸς ἀνθρώπους δοκεῖν ἱκανῶς λέγειν, ῥᾶον ἢ περὶ θνητῶν πρὸς ἡμᾶς. ἡ γὰρ ἀπειρία καὶ σφόδρα ἀγνοια τῶν ἀκούοντων περὶ ὧν ἂν οὕτως ἔχωσιν πολλὴν εὐπορίαν παρέχεσθον τῷ μέλλοντι λέγειν τι περὶ αὐτῶν· περὶ δὲ δὴ θεῶν ἴσμεν ὡς ἔχομεν.

In fact, Timaeus, upon an audience of human beings it is easier to produce the impression of adequate treatment in speaking of gods than in discoursing of mortals like ourselves. The combination of unfamiliarity and sheer ignorance in an audience makes the task of one who is to treat a subject towards which they are in this state easy in the extreme, and in this matter of gods we know, of course, how the case stands with us (tr. Taylor).

Critias thus claims that, since a human audience is ignorant about the nature of the gods, it is far easier to produce the impression of an adequate treatment of them than it is to do so of human subjects. While Critias is concerned here with the impression (δοκεῖν) of a satisfactory treatment not with the possibility of giving a truly satisfactory account, still the remark that 'in this matter of the gods we know, of course, how the case stands with us' clearly implies that giving any account other than an ignorant one is simply out of the question. In order to illustrate his general point Critias pres-

tute the more fitting medium for exhibiting every kind of living creature, for those who are able to follow; for the rest, it will be through handicrafts (tr. Rowe)).

ents the illustration of an artist who undertakes to depict both divine and human figures (107b). The painter of divine figures is content, Critias maintains, if he can produce some faint resemblance of the gods, and the audience, because of its ignorance of the subject, accepts this with no criticism (107c4-d2):

πρῶτον μὲν ἀγαπῶμεν ἂν τίς τι καὶ βραχὺ πρὸς ὁμοιότητα αὐτῶν ἀπομιμεῖσθαι δυνατὸς ᾖ, πρὸς δὲ τοῦτοις, ἅτε οὐδὲν εἰδότες ἀκριβὲς περὶ τῶν τοιούτων, οὔτε ἐξετάζομεν οὔτε ἐλέγχομεν τὰ γεγραμμένα, σκιαγραφία δὲ ἀσαφεῖ καὶ ἀπατηλῇ χρώμεθα περὶ αὐτά·

for one thing, the artist is always well content if he can produce them with some faint degree of resemblance, and for another, that since our knowledge of such subjects is never exact, we submit his design to no criticism or scrutiny, but acquiesce, in these cases, in a dim and deceptive outline (tr. Taylor).

On the other hand, Critias argues, when it is the human form that the artist attempts to depict, the audience is familiar with the subject and this makes it quick to detect shortcomings and criticise the artists who does not present a ‘full and perfect resemblance’ (107d4) (πάσας πάντως τὰς ὁμοιότητας). The full significance of the illustration is then drawn out explicitly (107d5-8):

ταῦτόν δὴ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς λόγους ἰδεῖν δεῖ γιγνόμενον, ὅτι τὰ μὲν οὐράνια καὶ θεῖα ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα, τὰ δὲ θνητὰ καὶ ἀνθρώπινα ἀκριβῶς ἐξετάζομεν.

Well, we should recognise that the same is true of discourses. Where the subjects of them are celestial and divine, we are satisfied by mere faint verisimilitudes, where mortal and human we are exacting critics (tr. Taylor).

Thus Critias argues that as men are happy with ‘a dim and deceptive outline’ (σκιαγραφία δὲ ἀσαφεῖ καὶ ἀπατηλῇ, 107d1) of the divine nature in artists’ images, so we are content with ‘faint verisimilitudes’ (σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα, 107d7) in discourses about the gods. In terms of the present study this idea leads to the question of whether Plato regarded his own verbal images of the gods as simply ‘faint verisimilitudes’ with no more claim to represent the truth about the gods than that of painters’ portraits or sculptors’ statues of them. Plato did perceive some sort of relationship between verbal and artistic images, as his use of the term εἰκόν for both and his frequent comparisons between image-making in speech and art testify. And perhaps this perceived relationship between the two types of image indicates Plato’s attitude to verbal images of the gods. For if his own analogy is applied, Plato himself is the artist who ‘moulds’ the god he has ‘never seen nor fully conceived’ (*Phaedrus* 246c) and who may be content, like Critias’ painter, if his images of the gods possess ‘some faint degree of resemblance’. Of course, the problem remains that if an artist does not know the nature of his subjects, then it must be impossible — or at least highly unlikely — for him to capture in his work even a faint likeness. Plato does not address this problem, but the passages at *Republic* 377e ff. and *Laws* 905e ff. indicate that the standard for judging likenesses of the gods was, for Plato, the extent to which

they reflected not knowledge but beliefs about them. It thus seems reasonable to conclude that Plato would have expected his audience, like the audience in the *Critias* illustration, to accept his images of the gods as mere 'faint verisimilitudes' (σμικρῶς εἰκότα λεγόμενα) and not to seek to find therein the true nature of the gods. Whether or not this conclusion also applies in the case of Plato's soul images will be the theme of the next section.

V. Plato on Soul Images

The aim of this section is to assess the cognitive status of Plato's language about the soul and to try to establish Plato's own attitude to the significance of his own soul metaphors. The views of a number of critics will be examined and these will be tested against Plato's own remarks relating to his treatment of soul. The first part of the study will deal with Plato's statements about soul itself and about how far human knowledge of it is limited, and the second will deal with the question of whether the soul images are emotive, illustrative or epistemic.

Soul and Human Knowledge

Although the soul, like the gods, is presented as invisible and immortal, nevertheless there is a difference in their status for Plato, since the gods belong to a different order of things from human beings, whereas the soul is very much part of human life here in the phenomenal world. Although there are a number of statements in the dialogues that suggest that the nature of the gods is beyond human knowledge, this is not the case with the soul. Plato devotes a great deal of time and space to setting out his views on the soul and arguing for the truth of his claims. The soul is not presented as an entity which confounds rational discourse or inquiry, and, reflecting this, Plato offers numerous arguments both about the effect of human actions on the soul and about soul's immortality. For Plato the soul has a number of important functions:

- (1) it is the immortal principle of life;
- (2) it is that by which human beings reason and learn;
- (3) it is the means by which we interpret our perceptions of the world;
- (4) it is that part of us which desires and reacts emotionally to that which we perceive;
- (5) it is that part of us that has right and wrong behaviour as its proper concern;
- (6) it is that which moves itself.

Many of the discussions about soul are conducted in literal terms, and while metaphors are central to Plato's exposition, as will be shown, nevertheless the metaphors are working to express concepts which are believed to be objectively true. In other words, the metaphors are not a flight of fancy that take over when 'rational discourse' is no

longer possible. Throughout, Plato treats the soul as an aspect of life that can be known and can be understood. As well as discussion of the soul's functions, Plato expresses direct views on the value of soul:

- (7) the soul is better and stronger than the body;
- (8) it is the most precious and most divine thing a human being possesses;
- (9) its nature is improved by just and good behaviour but harmed by injustice and evil actions.

In addition, Plato on some occasions sets out the view that the soul has three 'parts': reason (λογιστικόν), spirit (θυμοειδές) and appetite (ἐπιθυμητικόν).¹³¹ However, despite the many claims and arguments made about soul, it is clear that Plato is not fully confident about certain aspects of it, such as: why and how soul came into being; how the soul is connected to the body; what exactly happens to an individual soul after death; and, most significantly, what kind of thing soul is or what form it has.

That Plato is not sure of what exactly the soul will experience in the afterlife — although he is sure that it will experience something — is conveyed by certain remarks in the *Phaedo*. The first doubts about human knowledge of the afterlife are voiced by Simmias at 85c. On the subject of the soul's experience after death, he confides (85c1-4): ἐμοὶ γὰρ δοκεῖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, περὶ τῶν τοιούτων ἴσως ὥσπερ καὶ σοὶ τὸ μὲν σαφές εἶδέναι ἐν τῷ νῦν βίῳ ἢ ἀδύνατον εἶναι ἢ παγχάλεπὸν τι ('I think, Socrates, as perhaps you do too, that in these matters certain knowledge is either impossible or very hard to come by in this life', tr. Gallop). In contrast, Socrates in this dialogue is firmly committed to the doctrine of immortality and to the view that justice pays not only in this life but also in the world beyond. His opinions about the afterlife are rooted in this view, and it is around this that his myth of the soul's experiences in the other world (107d-114d) is constructed. Nevertheless, for all his conviction, Socrates is not willing to claim that his story represents the whole truth on the matter (114d1-6):

Τὸ μὲν οὖν ταῦτα δισχυρίσασθαι οὕτως ἔχειν ὥς ἐγὼ διελήλυθα, οὐ πρέπει νοῦν ἔχοντι ἀνδρὶ· ὅτι μέντοι ἢ ταῦτ' ἐστὶν ἢ τοιαῦτ' ἅττα περὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἡμῶν καὶ τὰς οἰκήσεις, ἐπεὶ περ ἀθάνατόν γε ἡ ψυχὴ φαίνεται οὕσα, τοῦτο καὶ πρέπει μοι δοκεῖ καὶ ἄξιον κινδυνεύσαι οἰόμενῳ οὕτως ἔχειν — καλὸς γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος —

Now to insist that those things are just as I've related them would not be fitting for a man of intelligence; but that either that or something like it is true about our souls and their dwellings, given that the soul evidently is immortal, that, I think, is fitting and worth risking, for one who believes that it is so — for a noble risk it is — (tr. Gallop).

¹³¹ The terminology for these 'parts' differs on occasion, and how far and in what sense this language is metaphorical will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Thus Socrates qualifies his story: although he is certain of the soul's immortality, he will not insist that all the details of his account are true. He does not know what exactly the soul will experience after the death of the body.

In the *Timaeus* there are other statements regarding the limits of knowledge about the soul — this time on the questions of how it came into being and of the nature of its parts. Early in the dialogue Timaeus stresses that his account of creation must necessarily be regarded as a mere 'likely story' (29c4-d3):

ἐάν οὖν, ὦ Σώκρατες, πολλὰ πολλῶν πέρι, θεῶν καὶ τῆς τοῦ παντός γενέσεως, μὴ δυνατοὶ γινώμεθα πάντῃ πάντως αὐτοὺς ἑαυτοῖς ὁμολογουμένους λόγους καὶ ἀπηκριβωμένους ἀποδοῦναι, μὴ θαυμάσης· ἀλλ' ἐάν ἄρα μηδενὸς ἦττον παρεχόμεθα εἰκότας, ἀγαπᾶν χρή, μεμνημένους ὥς ὁ λέγων ἐγὼ ὑμεῖς τε οἱ κριταὶ φύσιν ἀνθρωπίνην ἔχομεν, ὥστε περὶ τούτων τὸν εἰκότα μῦθον ἀποδεχομένους πρέπει τοῦτου μηδὲν ἔτι πέρα ζητεῖν.

If then, Socrates, in many respects concerning many things — the gods and the generation of the universe — we prove unable to render an account at all points entirely consistent with itself and exact, you must not be surprised. If we can furnish accounts no less likely than any other, we must be content, remembering that I who speak and you my judges are only human, and consequently it is fitting that we should in these matters accept the likely story and look for nothing further (tr. Cornford).

Following this line of thought Timaeus tells how we should also accept the likely story or probable account of the generation of the soul (44c6-d2):

καὶ περὶ ψυχῆς, δι' ἧς τε αἰτίας καὶ προνοίας γέγονε θεῶν, τοῦ μάλιστα εἰκότος ἀντεχομένοις, οὕτω καὶ κατὰ ταῦτα πορευομένοις διεξιτέον

and concerning soul, and the reasons and forethought of the gods in producing them — of all this we must go on to tell, on the principle of holding fast to the most likely account (tr. Cornford).

Again at 72d Timaeus stresses the tentative nature of his account about certain aspects of the soul (72d4-8):

Τὰ μὲν οὖν περὶ ψυχῆς, ὅσον θνητὸν ἔχει καὶ ὅσον θεῖον, καὶ ὅπῃ καὶ μεθ' ὧν καὶ δι' ἧς χωρὶς ῥέσθῃ, τὸ μὲν ἀληθὲς ὥς εἴρηται, θεοῦ συμφήσαντος τότε ἂν οὕτως μόνως διισχυρίζοιμεθα· τὸ γε μὴν εἰκὸς ἡμῖν εἰρῆσθαι, καὶ νῦν καὶ ἔτι μᾶλλον ἀνασκοποῦσι διακινδυνευτέον¹³² τὸ φάναι καὶ πεφάσθαι.

¹³² Observe the similarity between the vocabulary of this passage and that of *Phdo.* 114d16 which makes an equivalent qualification about the status of the account: διισχυρίζοιμεθα/διισχυρίσασθαι; διακινδυνευτέον/κινδυνεύσαι, κίνδυνος.

Concerning the soul, then, we have stated what part of it is mortal and what divine, and where, in what company, and for what reasons the two are housed apart. We could confidently assert that our account is the truth only if it were first confirmed by heaven; but that it is the probable account we may venture to say now, and still more on further consideration. Let that claim, then, be taken as made (tr. Cornford).

In the light of these statements that the accounts of the soul's generation and composition are merely tentative, one might be tempted to interpret the passages as suggesting that the soul is an entity that lies beyond the realm of human knowledge. This, however, would be a mistake, since the import of these passages is qualified by the facts that the remarks at 44c relate not only to the generation of the soul but also to the generation of the body (περὶ σωμάτων κατὰ μέρη τῆς γενέσεως, 44c6) and that at 72d Timaeus is concerned with the connection of soul to body rather than with the nature of soul *per se*. Thus, since there is no question of the body posing special epistemological problems, these passages cannot be claimed as proof that Plato attributed such problems to the soul. Further, it is significant that when an exposition of the nature of soul is given at 34b-37c no new qualifying statement appears, although the whole of Timaeus' account is, of course, qualified by the statement at 29c. Therefore remarks in the *Timaeus* on the nature of knowledge of the soul do not provide conclusive evidence that the nature of soul poses special epistemological problems. For a more revealing statement on the limits of human knowledge about the soul, one must turn to the *Phaedrus*.

In the *Phaedrus* Socrates argues and claims to have proved that soul is immortal. After presenting the 'proofs' of immortality, Socrates declares on the subject of soul (246a3-7):

Περὶ μὲν οὖν ἀθανασίας αὐτῆς ἱκανῶς· περὶ δὲ τῆς ἰδέας αὐτῆς ὧδε λεκτέον. οἷον μὲν ἔστι, πάντῃ πάντως θείας εἶναι καὶ μακρὰς διηγέσεως, ᾧ δὲ ἔοικεν, ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ ἐλάττονος· ταύτῃ οὖν λέγωμεν. εἰοικέτω δὴ συμφύτῳ δυνάμει ὑποπτέρου ζεύγους τε καὶ ἡνιόχου.

About its immortality, enough has been said; about its form we must say the following. To say what kind of thing it is would require a long exposition, and one calling for utterly superhuman powers; to say what it resembles requires a shorter one, and one within human capacities. So let us speak in the latter way. Let it then resemble the combined power of a winged team of horses and their charioteer (tr. Rowe).

Thus when it comes to describing exactly what soul is, Socrates switches from a direct to an indirect account, comprised of the image of charioteer and horses. Thus Socrates will tell not what the nature of soul is but only what it is like (ἔοικεν). Is this a statement that it is impossible for human beings to tell the nature of the soul? If emphasis rests on the point that it would require a lengthy exposition (μακρὰς διηγέσεως) to tell what it is but that what it is like can be conveyed in a shorter account (ἐλάττονος),

it may seem that telling the nature of soul is simply a matter of time. Admittedly, this is acknowledged to be a very long time, which could explain why the task is described as 'divine' (θείας), but still there is no direct statement that the telling is impossible. The idea of the length of the account and the related idea of the time it takes to give it recalls Protagoras' famous remark concerning his knowledge of gods (80 B 4 DK):

περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὐθ' ὥς εἰσὶν οὐθ' ὥς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐθ' ὁποῖοί τινες ἰδέαν· πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναι ἢ τ' ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχύς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Concerning the gods I am unable to know either that they or that they are not, or what their appearance is like. For many are the things that hinder knowledge: the obscurity of the matter and the shortness of human life (tr. McKirahan).

So Protagoras points out that both the obscurity of the subject *and* the shortness of human life prevent him from attaining knowledge of the gods. Within the Platonic corpus in addition to the passage at *Phaedrus* 246a, there is a further example of a subject being described as too long to tell. In the myth of the *Phaedo* at 114c Socrates is discussing the afterlife habitations of the souls purified by philosophy. Here again the difficulty of describing the subject is related to the length of the account: ὅς οὔτε ῥᾶδιον δηλώσαι οὔτε ὁ χρόνος ἱκανὸς ἐν τῷ παρόντι ('[dwelling places] which it is not easy to reveal, nor is the time sufficient at present', tr. Gallop). It may be that Plato's point in both the *Phaedrus* and *Phaedo* is simply that the account in question would require more time and space than are available at present. However, with regard to the *Phaedrus* passage, if emphasis rests on the distinction between the divine (θείας) and mortal (ἀνθρωπίνης), it does seem that Socrates is saying that while human beings can tell what the soul is *like*, it would take a god to say what the soul *is*. This reading, stressing the gulf between divine and human knowledge, is supported by other occasions in the dialogues where Plato uses the adjective θεῖος or the phrase 'only God knows' to indicate that a particular issue is simply beyond human knowledge.¹³³ However, although these passages establish a great gulf between human and divine knowledge, it must be noted that just because Plato may indicate that giving an account of something is impossible at one time, this need not suggest that it would always be impossible. For throughout the dialogues Plato continually reworks and develops his ideas. Thus he need not rule out the possibility that when his ideas have progressed further, he may be able to give the desired account of the soul's nature or other difficult subjects. However, in the *Phaedrus* it seems that an account of the soul's nature is at present impossible and so Socrates will turn to what the soul is like. The myth that follows offers a view of soul which must be read as a likeness and not as an account of soul's actual nature.

¹³³ See *Phdr.* 266b8, *Rep.* 517b8, *Tim.* 53d6 and *Laws* 873d1 and 913d4.

There is, of course, a problem here in that if Socrates/Plato does not know and cannot tell what the nature of soul *is*, then how can he know or tell what it is *like*?¹³⁴ This problem is not addressed in Plato's text and all that can be concluded is that the picture of soul offered in the myth is somehow like its real nature, even though at the moment this nature cannot be set forth. But if Plato stresses that the picture of soul in the myth is simply a likeness, given his own low opinion of likenesses (see above 2.II and 2.III), why should any weight at all be attached to the many images and metaphors for the soul which are presented in the myth? If Plato does not know and cannot tell what soul is, how can his metaphors or images for it have any significance?

One very old answer to this question (from 1666) is that of Bishop Samuel Parker¹³⁵ who not only fulminates at metaphor in general but also at the soul metaphors used by Platonists. On Parker's empiricist view these metaphors are 'idle and insignificant Non-sense' because the Platonists are 'altogether ignorant of the nature and Substance of the Soul' and are unable to express their thoughts on soul in 'proper' (one may read 'literal') terms:

[Platonists] draw Metaphors from all the Senses, Members and Functions of the Body, from all the General Hypotheses of Nature; from all the Phaenomena of the Heavens and the Earth, from all the several Properties and Operations of the several species of Creatures and apply them to the Nature, Faculties and operations of the Soul; But because they are altogether ignorant of the nature and substance of the Soul and are not able to express the greatest part of these things by proper terms, all these Metaphors must pass for idle and insignificant Non-sense, because they signifie we know not what, and describe we know not how.

This eloquent and sturdy criticism gets to the heart of the problem of using images to speak of a subject of which one admits ignorance. I agree with Parker that there is indeed a serious problem in telling what something is like when one cannot, for whatever reason, tell what it is. For there is thus no obvious way for the likeness to be judged. Parker's point is fairly straightforward: since Plato does not know the nature of the soul, he cannot create meaningful images of it. Leaving aside the issue of what would constitute knowledge of the soul, the important question for the present discussion is whether metaphors are cognitively significant only when they derive from true knowledge. Against Parker, I would contend that metaphors and images can play a significant cognitive role in the exposition and development of ideas which do not necessarily have the status of knowledge and which do not necessarily relate to truth and reality. This is to understand 'cognitive' in its wider sense of pertaining to intellectual activity of any kind, covering the apprehension of new ideas, notions, intuitions

¹³⁴ See Chapter 3 (3.VI) where the same problem is raised in connection with metaphors for God.

¹³⁵ Bishop Samuel Parker, *A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie*, 1666, pp. 76-7.

etc., as well as the acquisition of knowledge in the objective sense of the term. On this view, even if one maintains that knowledge of the soul is impossible and that any statements about such a concept are simply matters of belief or faith, one can still regard Plato's soul metaphors as performing a significant cognitive role, since they help to establish and develop his ideas and theories about soul. Thus I reject Parker's empiricist view that without true knowledge Plato's soul metaphors are 'Non-sense'.

Moving from 17th century empiricism to the opposite extreme, A. de Marignac has argued (1951) that Plato's soul metaphors, far from being nonsense, actually serve to 'mitigate' Plato's ignorance about the soul. De Marignac maintains that ignorance (or rather 'insufficient knowledge') about the soul is one of the reasons why Plato uses images (pp. 137-8):

C'est dans l'imperfection de la connaissance des êtres réels, des essences intelligibles, Dieu, le Bien, et aussi de cet être dont la position est si particulière, l'âme, que nous pensons trouver l'une des raisons du recours à l'expression imagée . . . cette connaissance insuffisante contraint Platon . . . à user d'une expression imagée.¹³⁶

This seems a reasonable claim given Plato's comment at *Phaedrus* 246d but de Marignac goes beyond this to argue that images are the best, 'if not the only', way that Plato can express the true nature of the soul — a point which, in my opinion, is not supported by the texts.

De Marignac makes a distinction between Plato's 'simple psychological analysis, based on observation of actions' and his attempts to express the 'real essence' (l'être réel, p. 138) of the soul. From this he argues that although Plato could express psychological observations without recourse to imagery, nevertheless the real essence of soul was 'ineffable' (p. 132) and so could only be expressed by means of images (pp. 145-6): 'il ne lui était pas possible d'exprimer l'être véritable, l'être métaphysique de l'âme en un langage qui ne fût pas imagé . . . L'image est donc plus et autre chose qu'un simple symbole; elle est, lorsqu'il faut dire l'essence, le moyen le meilleur, si ce n'est pas le seul, qui permette à l'auteur de dire ce qui ne peut être dit'.¹³⁷ For de Marignac imagery derives its special expressive capacity from its 'incantatory power' ('la force incantatoire') which comes from its poetic and 'mystic' potential (p. 149). It is because of this potential that imagery has an important cognitive significance, since (p. 135): 'L'image sert à pallier une connaissance insuffisante du spirituel'.¹³⁸ The image of

¹³⁶ 'It is in the imperfection of knowledge of real beings, of intelligible essences, God, the Good, and also of this being whose situation is so special, the soul, that I believe I have found one of the reasons for recourse to imagery . . . this inadequate knowledge forces Plato . . . to express himself through imagery.'

¹³⁷ 'It was not possible for him to express true existence, the metaphysical existence of the soul in a language which was not figurative . . . Therefore the image is more than and different from a simple symbol; it is the best way, if not the only way, that allows the author, when he must speak of the essence, to say what cannot be said.'

¹³⁸ 'The image serves to overcome inadequate knowledge of the spiritual.'

reason at *Laws* 897d-e is given as an example of imagery working in this way and on the image of the Form of Good in *Republic* de Marignac comments (pp. 137-8): 'Cette expression imagée est donc là pour pallier la difficulté qu'il y a à formuler ce qu'on connaît mal: c'était pour lever un coin du voile de ténèbres qui nous cache ce qu'est le Bien que le Socrate de la *République* recourait à l'image du soleil (506d-e).'¹³⁹ This idea of 'lifting a corner of the veil of shadows' and the later development of an argument for the mystic potential of metaphor (pp. 149-58) suggest that de Marignac holds that the use of imagery somehow allows a thinker to overcome the limitations of his knowledge of spiritual entities. The evidence of the dialogues, however, does not sustain this interpretation, for there are no passages that claim that imagery, metaphor or any other indirect forms of expression can provide mystical insight.

Moving on to more contemporary claims about the use of metaphors, there are essentially three approaches, as discussed in Chapter 1: first the illustrative view that the metaphors are a powerful tool in exposition but cannot convey information over and above that conveyed by literal language; second the nonpropositional thesis that metaphors work only or primarily to stimulate particular responses and to arouse certain feelings; and third the epistemic view which sees metaphor as having special expressive capacities over and above those of literal language. As was discussed at the end of Chapter 1, there is a growing orthodoxy in contemporary psychology that language of the soul (or mind) is intrinsically metaphorical and that metaphor is a necessary feature of psychological inquiry. Thus many modern psychologists would seem to have accepted the epistemic view of metaphor in scientific inquiry. But that is not to say that their analysis can be simply transferred to the case of Plato's metaphors of soul. For while these metaphors are indeed active in Plato's development of theory, it must be remembered that they are also produced within the literary framework of a dialogue, where poetic expression has an important role to play and where Plato is evidently engaging in rhetoric to support the claims of his philosophy. So which of these approaches, if any, can account for Plato's soul metaphors? The first candidate for dismissal is the nonpropositional thesis. For to claim that these metaphors work only or primarily to arouse feelings would be to ignore the mass of information about the soul that is conveyed in metaphorical terms throughout the dialogues. Consider, for example, the *Republic* and its extended image of the soul as a state with different people within (books IV, VIII and IX). It is abundantly clear that this image expresses Plato's conception of the relations between the different parts of the soul and the nature of justice in the soul. I do not deny that the metaphors and images have significant emotive power; obviously they do and the following chapters will demonstrate how this is an essential element in their rhetorical effectiveness. But these metaphors also state propositions, and in many cases their primary role is to illuminate difficult ideas,

¹³⁹ 'Therefore this image is there to overcome the difficulty of formulating what one hardly knows: it was to lift a corner of the veil of shadows which hides the Good from us that the Socrates of *Rep.* resorted to the image of the sun (506d-e).'

such as the tripartite division of the soul or what happens psychologically when a lover sees his beloved.

Of the three approaches to metaphor it seems that the illustrative thesis and Eva Kittay's version of the epistemic view offer the accounts most likely to explain the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors. In terms of approaches to metaphor in general, the illustrative thesis has been dominant for a long period. But this has been called into question by the recent analysis of metaphor, particularly in science, and the greatest challenge to this view has been posed by the arguments of Black, Boyd and Kittay (see Chapter 1). These critics share a great deal of common ground: all accept the interaction theory and all maintain that metaphors can be cognitively irreducible in that they generate new knowledge and insight and convey ideas which cannot be conveyed in literal terms. But among these Kittay's theoretical standpoint is, in my opinion, the most developed and most convincing. The crucial difference between Kittay's views and those of the other two is that whereas Black and Boyd believe that metaphors can generate radically new information about the world or about 'how things are in reality',¹⁴⁰ Kittay's perspectival view is more modest in its claims, since she maintains only that (p. 39): 'the cognitive force of metaphor comes, not from providing new information about the world, but rather from a (re)conceptualisation of information that is already available to us'. On this view the metaphor works cognitively not by 'positing new existents' (p. 302) but by leading the reader to reconceptualise particular information or experience that is already known and familiar. Kittay's qualification of earlier views is important since it avoids many of the problems involved in the claims that metaphors can make known the radically unknown¹⁴¹ or that they can express new truths about reality. If Kittay's thesis is applied to Plato's soul metaphors, the question becomes not (for example) whether the soul exists or whether it does actually travel through different lives, but how the metaphor of the soul's journey structures, and so provides an understanding of, the experiences of life and death. This version of the epistemic thesis allows one to move away from the question of how metaphors relate to 'reality' — a point on which the illustrative thesis and other versions of the epistemic thesis clash — and so concentrate attention on what is a more fundamental difference between these two theses: their conflicting views on the relation between metaphors and literal language. On the illustrative thesis metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things that can be said in literal terms. Thus it holds that one can always dispense with metaphors and still express the same information literally. In this way a statement with metaphors removed may lose much of its impact and persuasiveness but will still convey the same essential idea. Kittay and other critics, however, are firmly set against this view, maintaining that some metaphorical statements simply cannot be 'reduced' or 'translated' into literal terms and thus that such metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable. Therefore, as this study seeks to determine

¹⁴⁰ See Boyd, pp. 518-9 and Black, 'More about metaphor', p. 39.

¹⁴¹ See e.g. Petrie and Oshlag, p. 583.

which of these views best accounts for the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors, the key question is whether any of the soul metaphors are irreducible and cognitively irreplaceable. To put the question another way: are there in the dialogues theories or ideas about the soul which are *only*, and which *can* only be, expressed in metaphorical terms? The answer to this question is by no means obvious and it will be the task of Chapters 5 and 6 to address the matter in detail.

Before analysing the actual metaphors for the gods and the soul, it is necessary to clarify one issue that has dogged previous debate and which continues to cause confusion: the relationship between metaphor and myth in Plato. The great myths in the dialogues are the contexts for many of the images for gods and souls. Various claims have been made about the cognitive status and roles of Plato's myths, and these, if true, would have an important bearing on the assessment of the role of the metaphors used within them. Therefore, before analysing the individual metaphors, it will be necessary to test the claims about Plato's myths and establish the precise relationship between metaphor and myth in Plato.

VI. The Cognitive Role of Plato's Myths

Many critics detect a close connection between the roles of metaphor and myth, both in respect of Plato's works and other literature.¹⁴² With regard to Plato's myths and metaphors for the gods and the soul, a connection is readily apparent, since a number of Platonic myths involve tales of both the activities of gods and the nature and fate of the soul. Many of the metaphors for the gods and the soul are concentrated in and around these myths, and indeed the myths themselves are constructed around certain root metaphors, which become integral to their content. For example, in each of the myths about the afterlife fate of the soul (e.g. in the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias* and *Republic*) the story depends to a large extent on metaphors such as the journey of the soul and its physical appearance. Various critics have claimed a special role for Plato's myths, regarding them as able to deliver mystical insight or at least a privileged access to knowledge. If it were the case that the myths provided such a special cognitive access, this would have important consequences for interpreting the role of the metaphors that are integral to their content. If it were proved that the myths offer privileged access to the nature of gods or the concept of soul, then the precise nature of the contribution of metaphor to this process would have to be determined. I do not favour a mystical approach to Plato's discourse on the gods or the soul and do not accept that the myths offer any kind of privileged access to knowledge over and above the points established by dialectic. It will be beneficial to discuss in more detail the various approaches to Plato's myths in order to clear away some of the more unhelpful claims that have been made concerning their cognitive role. This in turn will allow the question of the rela-

¹⁴² See e.g. Cooper, *Metaphor*, p. 108; Burrell, pp. 59-60; Berggren, 'From myth to metaphor'; Annas, 'Plato's myths of judgement'; and Steiner, pp. 136-48.

tionship between metaphor and myth to be determined in a way that does not simply conflate the two.

A number of different approaches to Plato's myths will be tested against the evidence of the dialogues to determine which is the most satisfactory. The subject of Plato's use of myth is large and has received a great deal of critical attention.¹⁴³ My concern, however, is narrow: to set out the different views on the cognitive role of myths. Given the close relationship between myth and metaphor, it is perhaps not surprising to find the same trends of thought on the role of myths as on the role of metaphor (see Chapter 1). Some critics argue that myth provides an insight into certain truths which cannot be gained in any other way (compare the epistemic view of metaphor), some contend that the power of myth lies primarily in its emotive power (compare the nonpropositional view of metaphor) and others maintain that the myths play important rhetorical and didactic roles in illustrating and supplementing the conclusions of dialectic (compare the illustrative view).

1. The 'Romantic' View

The term 'Romantic' has been used to describe the view that human beings can achieve through poetic inspiration and myth a revelation of a higher truth and can experience a glimpse of the divine.¹⁴⁴ M.J. Gregory is one proponent of this view (p. 285):

The content of myth, then, is seen to be a cognitive and mystical relation to the transcendent. The revelation of the Absolute is penetrated more and more profoundly by means of imaginative cognition or 'mythical thinking' and communicated in the myth form. The Absolute is reached mystically through myth-irradiated ritual or mythopoeic contemplation.

Gregory uses the remarks at the beginning of the *Phaedrus* myth (246a) to support her claim that Plato himself shared this view of his myths. She takes the statement that 'it would be a long and divine task to tell the nature of soul' as evidence for Plato's belief that the soul is an entity that must be 'revealed' (p. 292): 'The reason for this mythical

¹⁴³ J. Adam, 'The myth in Plato's *Polit.*'; J.A. Stewart, *The Myths of Plato*; P. Frutiger, *Les Mythes de Platon*; A.E. Taylor, Review of *Les Mythes de Platon* by Frutiger and 'Socrates and the Myths'; J. Tate, 'Socrates and the myths' and 'Reply to Prof. A. E. Taylor'; Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion* (pp. 239-42); Dodds, 'Plato and the irrational'; L. Edelstein, 'The Function of the myth in Plato's philosophy'; Friedländer, *Plato — An Introduction* (pp. 171-210); Anton, 'Plato's philosophical use of myth'; D. Berggren, 'From myth to metaphor'; Gregory, 'Myth and transcendence in Plato'; L. Tarán, 'The creation myth in Plato's *Tim.*'; Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. IV Plato* (pp. 294, 305-7, 335-8, 361-3, 365, 399, 432, 462-4, 486; Annas, 'Plato's myths of judgement'; Cook, 'Dialectic, irony and myth in Plato's *Phdr.*'; Smith, 'Plato's myths as "likely accounts", worthy of belief' and 'Plato's use of myth in the education of philosophic man'; J.-F. Mattei, 'The theater of myth in Plato'; McCabe, 'Myth, allegory and argument in Plato'.

¹⁴⁴ Edelstein, p. 464.

treatment, as Plato himself says, is that the topics to be treated are beyond the scope of rational demonstration and actually require to be revealed.' Gregory later makes even more of the statement at *Phaedrus* 246a, ascribing to Plato the view that knowledge of the transcendent is attainable only through myth (p. 295): 'In short, the objective of the myth was knowledge of the transcendent for the purpose of participation. But such knowledge, as Plato says at the beginning of the myth, is not attainable except through the symbolic mode of the myth'.

Plato, however, makes no statement either here or anywhere else in the dialogues that knowledge of the transcendent is only attainable through myth. What he says here is that human beings cannot give an account of the nature of soul and therefore he will say through myth what the soul is like. Thus he has shelved completely the question of the actual nature of soul and is not using myth to say (and still less to achieve knowledge of) what soul's nature is. There is no claim that the myth can in any way go beyond what can be said in direct discourse.

2. The 'Kantian' Approach

The view which has been termed 'Kantian'¹⁴⁵ regards the basic role of myth as that of arousing emotion. This view is propounded by J.A. Stewart who early in his book expresses vividly the energy of Plato's myths (p. 2): 'The Myth bursts in upon the Dialogue with a revelation of something new and strange; the narrow, matter-of-fact workaday experience, which the argumentative conversation puts in evidence, is suddenly flooded, as it were, and transfused by the inrush of a vast experience, as from another world'. Key words here are 'as it were' and 'as from another world', for thus Stewart avoids the idea that the myths actually provide a revelation of a world beyond and instead limits his claim to the response of the reader who *feels* as if a revelation is occurring — a quite different matter altogether. For Stewart the Platonic myth is not illustrative, 'it is not Allegory rendering pictorially results already obtained by argument' (p. 2), but rather the myths are 'Dreams expressive of Transcendental Feeling' (p. 42), a view on which he elaborates with regard to the myth of the *Politicus* (p. 300):

The goodness of the State must be written large in that of the Universe: written, not, indeed, in characters which the scientific faculty can at last be sure that it has deciphered, but in the hieroglyphics as it were, of a mysterious picture writing which, although it does not further definite knowledge, inspires that Wonder which is the source of Philosophy, that Fear which is the beginning of Wisdom.

So, on this view, myths are not designed to further knowledge but to inspire wonder. It is certainly true that Plato's myths have enormous emotive power, a point acknowl-

¹⁴⁵ Edelstein, p. 464.

edged by most critics, but is it true that they are not designed to further 'definite knowledge'? The next two approaches to myth in Plato will argue that the myths have a special role to play in advancing knowledge and understanding of the subjects under discussion. But the two views differ radically as to the nature of this understanding.

3. Myths and Matters of Faith

The idea that the myths are primarily a means of expressing beliefs and objects of faith is found in the work of both E.R. Dodds and W.K.C. Guthrie. Dodds in 'Plato and the Irrational' maintains that Plato distinguishes two levels of truth — truths of religion and truths of reason — and uses myth to express the former. The relevant passage from Dodds is quoted in full, since it is the starting point of an approach which has had an important influence on Platonic studies. Dodds argues (pp. 23-4):

Mythical thinking is thinking in images, and its logic is wholly or partly the logic of feeling, like the coherence of a dream or a work of art, not the logic of science or philosophy. Its conclusions are valid for those who share the feeling, but they cannot compel assent. In this Plato's myths resemble the intuitions of the poet or the seer. Plato knew this, and has warned us of it more than once: (*Gorg.* 527a, *Phdo.* 114d, *Tim.* 29c-d). It is our own fault if we insist on ignoring the distinction, and the result is likely to be confusion . . . Plato, then, if I am right, . . . admits two types of belief or two levels of truth, which we may call respectively truths of religion and truths of reason. The truths of religion are, as such, indemonstrable and he does not claim for them more than a probability that 'this or something like it' is true (*Phdo.* 114d) . . . Plato preferred to convince readers by reasoning rather than emotive eloquence and so continually tried to transpose his religious beliefs from the mythical to the philosophical level, thus transforming them into truths of reason.

Guthrie ('Plato's views on the nature of soul') fully accepts Dodds's views and applies them to the question of soul. Since the present inquiry seeks to establish Plato's attitude to his images of the soul, Guthrie's views are pertinent (pp. 230-1):

Plato admitted two levels of truth which may roughly be called truths of religion and truths of reason. There will always be some truths, and those the highest, which cannot be proved dialectically but must be conveyed in the form of myth, the details of which can claim only probability, not precise accuracy. At the same time he regarded it as the philosopher's duty to push back the frontiers of reason and win for it all possible ground from the domain of mythical imagery . . . (p. 231) [. . .] As an example, we may say that immortality was for Plato a matter of rational proof, whereas what befell the immortal part of us after death could only be hinted at in a *ἱερὸς λόγος*.

The crucial difference between this and the 'Kantian' approach of critics such as Stewart is that, whereas Dodds and Guthrie stress that Plato will constantly seek to

'reclaim ground' from the realm of mythical imagery, that is, treat the subjects dealt with in myth also by rational means whenever he can, the 'Kantian' approach places a much firmer and more enduring division between rational argument and myth, and claims that some matters must, and can only ever, be dealt with in myth. For example, Stewart separates 'Categories of the Understanding' (which can be objects of scientific understanding) from 'Ideas of Reason' (which must remain matters of faith), and sees myth as performing a special role in relation to the latter (p. 337): 'The mythological treatment of Categories of the Understanding stands on a different footing from that of Ideas of Reason in this important respect, that it is not the only treatment of which the Categories are capable. The Ideas of Reason, Soul, Cosmos and God, if represented at all, must be represented in Myth.' Stewart is particularly interested in Plato's treatment of soul and, on the question of expressing ideas about the soul, takes a radical view (p. 126): 'It is only in vision — in Myth — and not scientifically, that the Idea of Soul, or Subject, can be represented, or held up to contemplation as an Object at all.' On this view, then, myth is the *only* way that Plato can express his thoughts on particular matters such as the soul or God. Given that for Stewart the myths are not illustrative but function only as a means of arousing 'Transcendental Feeling', it emerges that for him concepts such as the soul or God cannot be reasoned about or illustrated but only experienced emotionally. The evidence from the dialogues, however, shows that Plato was continually bringing all the power of his reasoning to bear on these very subjects, and thus Stewart's analysis in this respect is unacceptable.

However, could it be that although Stewart is wrong in the claim that the soul and God cannot be reasoned about, he is nevertheless right in the claim that in Plato the myths are completely divorced from scientific reasoning? There is clearly a difference between developing lines of argument and telling mythical stories, but is it true to say that Plato simply suspends 'scientific' or 'rational' thought when he begins to use the form of myth? The next approach to myth will argue that it is not.

4. Myths and Reason

This approach studies the content of Plato's myths in relation to the arguments of the dialogues in which they occur. Evidence is found to prove that the myths are a continuation of the analysis undertaken in the dialogues and thus to refute the view that myths are an 'irrational' or 'non-scientific' type of discourse.

Edelstein, writing in 1949, acknowledges the 'captivating grace' of Plato's myths and sees them as an 'instrument of the intellect' (p. 466): 'Plato composes his philosophical myth in accordance with that insight which he has gained through dialectical analysis. The myth to him is a story shaped at will. As such it is not the antithesis to reason . . . The myth, in his hands, is truly an instrument of the human intellect.' This is not to say, however, that Plato sees no difference between the cognitive status of ideas established by dialectic and those presented in the myth. For Plato is careful to indicate that the content of his myths does not share the certainty of the conclusions

established by dialectic. Plato does not lose sight of the fact that the myths cannot prove but can merely persuade. Edelstein rejects the ideas that the Platonic myth works at the level of allegory and that the myths offer a revelation of higher truths (p. 466):

Whoever takes the Platonic myth as allegory is hardly right. Ancient and modern Neo-Platonists are refuted by Plato's own words . . . But whoever finds in the Platonic myths the revelation of a higher knowledge is not right either. Reason to Plato is supreme; myth is subservient to reason. For him, the myth has nothing solemn or mysterious, as the Romanticists are prone to imagine. Plato's philosophical fable is the fable of the philosopher.

The same approach is adopted by J.P. Anton (1964), who argues that myth is a 'supplement to logical discourse' (p. 165):

Plato's practice affords abundant evidence that he regarded myth as a dramatically necessary supplement to logical discourse, conjoined to the total work of grasping and following through with the possibilities of subject-matter . . . There seems to be no internal evidence to the effect that Plato ever meant myth to be a substitute for or perform functions beyond and above those of philosophical reasoning. Nor did he see myth as something *a-logical* and irrational. To be sure, he sees myth as intelligent disclosure, its logic being that of drama, of imaginative language, of philosophical *mythologein*.¹⁴⁶

It is Anton's main thesis that Plato criticises the work of the poets but rehabilitates poetry itself by giving it a new role: 'to become the philosophic function of the mythical imagination' (p. 164). In line with this he argues that the myths are intended to give dramatic embodiment to the true 'realities' already revealed by dialectic (p. 166). Anton stresses the plausible and suggestive qualities of myth and regards them as presenting issues in a 'dramatic' fashion. The myth, then, supports the conclusions of dialectic (p. 165): 'mythical talking is not to be taken in the sense of offering the sort of thing we may call "an alternative hypothesis". Myth, in this respect, is meant as a likely story that illuminates rather than explains a domain which rational discourse explores.' Janet E. Smith likewise emphasises the nature of Plato's myths as likely stories, written to supplement the arguments of the dialogues. In her article 'Plato's myths as "likely accounts", worthy of belief', she develops two main lines of argument, both of which accord with the views of Edelstein and Anton: first that the myths express ideas and views which Plato elsewhere argues for dialectically; and second that, although they are linked with dialectic, nevertheless the myths in themselves do not represent knowledge or proof of any matter. Smith regards the myths as expressions of opinion rather than demonstrations and argues that this was also Plato's own view (p. 24):

¹⁴⁶ Anton (p. 166) supports this view with a quotation from P. Shorey (*Platonism: Ancient and Modern*, p. 92): 'P. Shorey remarks appropriately that "Plato does use myths in supplementary expression of rational hopes. But never sets intuition above reason, in the fashion of modern mystics."'

[Plato] recognises that his myths are fiction, a blend of what is true and what is imaginative; he intends that both the myths which are told as a part of the educational program of the state and within his own dialogues be composed by the philosophers in accord with their best knowledge; and no matter how refined the myths are, and no matter how closely linked they are with dialectical argumentation, they are by their nature only in the realm of true opinion. Plato viewed myth (approved myth) as a kind of *logos* — one which was approximate and thus open to revision, but nonetheless one which is deserving of our belief, if only in a provisional way.

On this view Plato himself considered his myths to be 'likely stories' (εἰκότες λόγοι, a phrase used at *Timaeus* 29c and *passim*) and carefully distinguished these from dialectical accounts.¹⁴⁷ Smith explain the distinction (p. 37):

Now although an *eikos logos* is *eikos* for the very reason that it does correspond with what one knows to be true, this does not suffice to convert an *eikos logos* into a 'true logos' in the sense of a truth established by dialectic or a truth which could be the object of knowledge . . . In short, an *eikos logos* offers no proof for any of its contents, neither for that which is susceptible to proof nor for that for which no proof is possible. The *eikos logos* may be persuasive, but it is not a demonstration.

Smith presents convincing evidence from the dialogues in support of her thesis that Plato considered his myths as tentative or provisional accounts, which are worthy of belief until better knowledge or proof about the matters in hand could be attained. This evidence comes from the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*. The relevant passages from the *Phaedo*, *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus* have been discussed above¹⁴⁸ and Smith adds to these *Gorgias* 527a5 and *Republic* 621b-c. The *Gorgias* stresses that the preceding myth of the afterlife presents only a provisional account (527a5-8):

Τάχα δ' οὖν ταῦτα μῦθος σοι δοκεῖ λέγεσθαι ὥσπερ γραὸς καὶ καταφρονεῖς αὐτῶν, καὶ οὐδέν γ' ἂν ἦν θαυμαστὸν καταφρονεῖν τούτων, εἰ πῃ ζητοῦντες εἶχομεν αὐτῶν βελτίω καὶ ἀληθέστερα εὐρεῖν

¹⁴⁷ The same point is made much earlier (1930) by P. Frutiger in *Les mythes de Platon*, whose argument is neatly summed up by A.E. Taylor in his review (p. 493): 'The "myth" in Plato is characterised simply by a contrast not with truth, but with "dialectic". That is, its distinctive character is not that it is false — on the contrary, it is often the vehicle for expressing what Plato regards as supremely important truth — but that what it asserts cannot be completely demonstrated. This is why assertions about the structure and destiny of the ψυχή have to be largely conveyed in myth; they are true, or as near the truth as Plato can make them, but he is aware that his positions, however true, are not capable of complete demonstration, and is conscientiously anxious to mark the point.' For the same view, see also Burrell, pp. 59-60.

¹⁴⁸ *Phdo.* 114d, *Tim.* 72d and *Phdr.* 246a.

Now perhaps you think these things I've said are a tale like an old wife's, and you despise them. And certainly it wouldn't be at all surprising to despise them, if we could search and somehow manage to find something better and truer (tr. Irwin).

In the *Republic* passage (the concluding remarks after the myth of Er) Socrates claims not that the myth is true but merely that belief in the myth could 'save' them and help them to be purer in soul (621b8-c2):

Καὶ οὕτως, ὦ Γλαύκων, μῦθος ἐσώθη καὶ οὐκ ἀπώλετο, καὶ ἡμᾶς ἂν σώσειεν, ἂν πειθώμεθα αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸν τῆς Λήθης ποταμὸν εὖ διαβησόμεθα καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὐ μιανθησόμεθα.

There you are, then, Glaucon. The story has made it safely through to the end, without perishing on the way. And it might save us too, if we take it to heart, and so successfully cross the River of Oblivion without defiling our souls (tr. Waterfield).

Various passages from the dialogues, then, support the view that Plato's myths are tentative, provisional accounts that do not represent actual knowledge or truth on the matters presented therein. At *Phaedo* 114d Socrates admits that it would not be reasonable to insist that 'those things are just as I've related them'; at *Gorgias* 527a he accepts that the myth could be dismissed as an old wife's tale *if* something truer could be found; after the myth of Er Socrates' claim is not that the myth is true but only that belief in it could 'save' them; at *Timaeus* 72d there is an explicit distinction between a true and a probable account, with the mythical account of the universe firmly pronounced to be merely of the probable variety; and, finally, at *Phaedrus* 246a there is an equally explicit distinction between describing the very nature of soul and saying what it resembles — with the myth of soul again firmly defined as an attempt only at the latter. However, for all these qualifications, the myths still must be taken seriously, since they are written in accordance with as much knowledge as Plato has on any subject and since they correspond with the 'truths' argued for in dialectic.

I accept Smith's interpretation of the passages above and agree with her that the myths are indeed tentative, provisional accounts which are constructed in the light of rational inquiry rather than mystical vision. I reject the 'Romantic' view of Plato's myths, as there is simply no evidence in the dialogues that the myths represent a special means of gaining knowledge about the gods, the soul or any other 'transcendental' subjects, which cannot be gained by other means. I also reject the 'Kantian' view, voiced by Stewart, whereby the myths function only as a means of arousing 'Transcendental Feeling', since it is clear that the myths present a great deal of information which does not appear elsewhere in the dialogues — for example, on Plato's concept of soul. Although I accept the claim of Dodds and Guthrie that myth for Plato is a means of expressing 'objects of faith', I would not wish to make such a hard and fast division between the myths and the 'rational' accounts in the main sections of the dialogues. For 'objects of faith' are also discussed outside the myths and, as Edelstein,

Anton and Smith have shown, it is misleading to think of the myths as 'irrational' or 'non-scientific'. There is a valid distinction to be made in the dialogues between myth and dialectic but not between myth and rational or logical discourse.

My conclusion, then, is that the myths do not provide any special cognitive access to the nature of the gods or the soul, and so there is no need to account for any special role for the metaphors of gods or soul in myth. If Plato is unsure about certain aspects of the soul, his myths will not provide him, or his audience, with any new knowledge beyond what can be said in non-mythic discourse. Equally, a metaphor by virtue of its being in a myth will not have greater 'revelatory' powers than those in the dialogues at large. Thus the analysis of the metaphors for gods and soul will not be affected by concerns about whether they appear in a mythic or dialectical context.

As Orpheus represented his mysteries by tales and fables, Pythagoras by numbers and Symbols, so Plato and his followers have (in imitation of them) communicated their Notions by Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Parables, heaps of Metaphors, Allegories, and all sorts of Mystical Representations (as is vulgarly known). All of which upon the account of their obscurity and Ambiguity are apparently the unfittest signes in the world to express the Train of any man's thought to another; For beside that they carry in them no Intelligible Affinity to the Notices which they were designed to intimate, the Powers of the Imagination are so great, and the instances in which one thing may resemble another are so many that there is scarce anything in nature in which the Fancie cannot find or make a Varietie of such Symbolising Resemblances; so that Emblems, Fables, Symbols, Allegories, though they are prettie Poetick Fancies, are infinitely unfit to express the Philosophical Notions and discoveries of the Natures of things; and besides, seeing that they have left us with no key to these dark Cyphers, there can be no sure and constant way to unriddle what conceptions are lock'd up under them so that it does not only require a great deal of pains to frame conjectures of their meaning, but the surest we can pitch upon are withal so uncertain and ambiguous that they unavoidably leave us fluctuating in meer uncertainties.

Samuel Parker, 'A Free and Impartial Censure of the Platonick Philosophie'
(1666).

3. Plato's Metaphors for the Gods

When I found out I thought God was white, and a man, I lost interest.

Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1983).

I. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to establish the cognitive significance of the different metaphors which Plato uses to speak of the gods.¹⁴⁹ The first task of the chapter will be to establish what exactly constitutes a metaphor for God in Plato and to clarify the use of the terms 'model' and 'metaphor' in the context of Plato's theology (3.II). The next step will be to consider the pre-Platonic background to Plato's models and metaphors (3.III) before moving on to examine the major models that Plato uses for the gods in order to establish their general cognitive significance (3.IV). Once the different models have been set out I shall argue that they are used by Plato not simply for variation but because each on its own is inadequate to express his concept of divinity (3.V). Following this overview the models will be assessed in terms of the three theses presented in Chapter 1, in order to determine whether they are emotive, illustrative or epistemic (3.VI).

II. Models and Metaphors in Plato's Theology

Throughout the dialogues Plato employs many images and metaphors for the gods and for divine influence over the universe and human life.¹⁵⁰ The great number of metaphors makes individual analysis impossible and so this examination will deal only with the key models and metaphors which give an indication of the trends within any particular group. Overall, Plato presents the gods through five main models, as divine beings are spoken of as:

¹⁴⁹ Various critics have written on these metaphors and the study will take into account the views of Lloyd, *PA*; Solmsen, 'Nature as craftsman in Greek thought'; Classen, 'The Creator in Greek thought from Homer to Plato'; de Marignac, *Imagination et dialectique*; and Louis, *Les Métaphores de Platon*. In *PA* (chapter IV) Lloyd discusses the role of metaphor and imagery in Greek cosmology and examines three dominant models: the cosmos as a state, as a living being and as a technologically created artefact. In the course of his analysis Lloyd comments on the associated metaphors for gods to which these three models give rise. Solmsen and Classen are concerned with the craftsman metaphor for God and have much to say that is useful but neither of them covers the other metaphors in any depth. De Marignac discusses Plato's metaphors for the Forms, the gods and the soul ('les réalités spirituelles') but deals only selectively with the metaphors for the gods, while Louis deals with a far greater range of divine metaphors but offers significantly less analysis.

¹⁵⁰ A comprehensive list of references for the divine models, images and metaphors in Plato is to be found in appendix 1.

- (1) Craftsmen
- (2) Fathers
- (3) Rulers, Governors, Guardians
- (4) Masters, Owners
- (5) Helmsmen.

The first task is to try to clarify the precise status of this language for the gods, resuming earlier debates about the relationship between metaphor and other figures (1.II.1) and about the use of metaphor in theology (1.IV).

On the relationship between metaphor and other figures, the essential point is that the distinctive and defining features of metaphor are deviation and the semantic clash requiring resolution. Since it is not correct to use the term 'metaphor' in the absence of such deviation and clash, any use of the phrase 'metaphor for god(s)' will refer to the use of non-standard language for god(s). The classification 'image for god(s)' is broader, since it includes not only metaphor but also simile and 'any trope or scheme based on analogy and similarity' (Silk, quoted in Chapter 1). The use of the phrase 'model for god(s)' in the following discussion will be consistent with the definition offered in Chapter 1, whereby the essential feature of a model is that it is a framework designed to develop understanding and, as such, involves a conscious decision to impose a particular structure on the concept or situation at issue. Although Plato has various aims and purposes in using metaphors, images and comparisons for gods in the dialogues, nevertheless, one constant feature is his desire to explain or account for his concept of divinity. In this respect all his images for the gods are to some extent designed to develop understanding. Further, since the images can be classified into the five main groups set out above, and since these various groups function as frameworks for understanding, it seems appropriate to speak of them as five different 'models' for gods. Within the models language can be standard or metaphorical, depending on how established its usage is. For example, within the model of God as a helmsman, the idea of 'steering' is a traditional image for government and control and so, arguably, the language is standard. But when God is spoken of within this model as 'retiring to his observation post' (*Politicus* 272e, εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περὶωπὴν ἀπέστη), the language is entirely novel and fresh and so is metaphorical. However, a particular usage cannot necessarily be classed as familiar and traditional (or as 'dead') metaphor simply on the basis that it has already occurred in earlier literature. Some striking metaphors can be used time and time again with no diminution of their prominence and deviation, while others quickly become standard features of the language and so 'die'. The process of determining the prominence and deviation of Greek metaphors is very complex and in most cases of established or traditional use I shall not offer decisive judgement on whether a phrase is metaphorical or standard and therefore literal. However, I hope to contribute something to the debate by pointing out those occasions when there is earlier usage of a particular term or phrase and where Plato's terminology for God does seem to be novel, deviant and thereby metaphorical. As Silk has observed (see Chapter

1), to judge terminology as live metaphor or as traditional usage (and therefore 'dead' metaphor) is not just an 'historical' but also an 'aesthetic' matter. Therefore it remains difficult and perhaps unwise to offer hard and fast judgements even in this limited exercise — notwithstanding the general problems that the surviving literature is a mere fraction of the Greek corpus, that Greek literary usage need not reflect ordinary Greek usage and, finally, that there is no scope in this study for a comprehensive analysis of the pre-Platonic literature. The section on pre-Platonic models for God will offer a brief summary in order to show the general background to Plato's development of particular models and metaphors.

A further issue on the question of what constitutes a Platonic metaphor for God is the relationship between metaphorical and analogical language. Soskice's definition (cited in Chapter 1) is worth bearing in mind: 'Analogy as a linguistic device deals with language that has been stretched to fit new applications yet fits the new situation without generating for the native speaker any imaginative strain'. Analogical language is, then, an extension of standard, literal usage which creates no strain or tension requiring resolution through the adoption of new perspectives. Thus there arises a useful distinction between metaphor as novel transference and analogy as well-established extension of meaning. As discussed in Chapter 1, critics in theology have concluded that since talk of God for the most part represents God in human terms, this language when it is not metaphorical is at least analogical, with terms being extended from their standard human application to fit the divine nature. On the personification of God, Swinburne has concluded that since God cannot be a 'person' in the same sense as a human being, then all personifying language for God is analogical. In general this personifying language for God is analogical rather than metaphorical because it is well established, but Swinburne concedes that distinguishing novel from established usage is far from straightforward. Indeed he himself fails to reach a final decision on the status of the phrase 'God the Father', which he admits could be classified as metaphorical or analogical (p. 158). Given these various complexities, it should now be clear that determining what is metaphorical language for the gods in Plato is not a straightforward matter. However, some principles have been established for the inquiry:

- (1) the phrase 'metaphor for god(s)' will be reserved for what seem to be novel usages in Plato;
- (2) the connected frameworks and clusters of metaphors, analogies and images for gods will be referred to as 'models';
- (3) established personifications of gods will not be classed as literal usage but as analogical (following Soskice and Swinburne);

and

- (4) where possible, citations will be given of earlier uses of the models and images of gods that appear in Plato.

In accordance with item (4), the next section will deal with the pre-Platonic background to the major models for gods that are found in the dialogues.

III. The Pre-Platonic Background

1. Craftsmen

Craftsman imagery is well established in the pre-Platonic Greek literary tradition, in the work of both poets and philosophers. Lloyd discusses the development of craftsman imagery in Greek philosophy¹⁵¹ and notes that in the pre-philosophical texts 'this type of imagery is already used . . . to describe the origins of particular things' (p. 207). As he says, the most notable instance of this use of craft imagery is in the story of the creation of Pandora, which Hesiod narrates twice: in *Works and Days* and in *Theogony*. In *Works and Days* Zeus commands Hephaestus, the craftsman god, to fashion the new creature (59-79):

ὥς ἔφατ', ἐκ δ' ἐγέλασσε πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε.

Ἥφαιστον δ' ἐκέλευσε περικλυτὸν ὅττι τάχιστα
γαῖαν ὕδρι φέρεειν, ἐν δ' ἀνθρώπου θέμεν αὐδὴν
καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτης δὲ θεῆς εἰς ὦπα εἰσκειν,
παρθενικῆς καλὸν εἶδος ἐπήρατον·

. . .

αὐτίκα δ' ἐκ γαίης πλάσσει κλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
παρθένῳ αἰδοίῃ Ἰκελὸν Κρονίδεω διὰ βουλᾶς·

. . .

ἐν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθεσσι διάκτορος Ἀργειφόντης
ψεύδεά θ' αἰμυλίου τε λόγους καὶ ἐπικλοπὸν ἦθος
τεύξε Διὸς βουλῆσι βαρυκτύπου· ἐν δ' ἄρα φωνήν
θήκε θεῶν κήρυξ,

So said the father of men and gods, and laughed aloud. And he bade famous Hephaestus make haste and mix earth with water and to put in it the voice and strength of human kind, and fashion a sweet, lovely maiden-shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face;

. . .

Forthwith the famous Lame God moulded clay in the likeness of a modest maid, as the son of Cronus purposed.

¹⁵¹ Lloyd, *PA*, ch. IV, pp. 272-94, 'Technological images: the *cosmos* as an artefact'. On the pre-philosophical background, see pp. 207-9.

...

Also the Guide, the Slayer of Argus, contrived within her lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature at the will of loud thundering Zeus, and the herald of the gods put speech in her (tr. Evelyn-White).

In *Theogony* 570 ff. Zeus, angry at the theft of fire from the gods, takes his revenge on humankind in the form of the creation of Pandora:

αὐτίκα δ' ἀντὶ πυρὸς τεύξεν κακὸν ἀνθρώποισι·

γαίης γὰρ σύμπλασσε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις

παρθένῳ αἰδοίῃ Ἰκελὸν Κρονίδεω διὰ βουλᾶς·

Forthwith he made an evil thing for men as the price of fire; for the very famous Limping God formed of earth the likeness of a shy maiden as the son of Cronus willed (tr. Evelyn-White).

Craft images for the creation of the human form are present in these passages in the key phrases: γαῖαν ὕδει φύρειν ('to mix earth with water'); ἐκ γαίης πλάσσε ('he moulded from clay'); τεύξε/τεύξεν ('he constructed, built, formed'); and γαίης γὰρ σύμπλασσε ('he moulded together out of clay'). On πλάσσειν/συνπλάσσειν Lloyd comments that these verbs 'might suggest such images as that of a potter moulding a clay figure before firing it, or a baker kneading dough' (*PA*, p. 208). Thus Hesiod presents a particular act of creation as manufacture by a craftsman god. However, as Lloyd tells, despite the use of such imagery for *aspects* of the world, the creation of the world *as a whole* was not presented in terms of craftsmanship in pre-philosophical writings (*PA*, p. 272).

Both Lloyd (*PA*, pp. 274 ff.) and Solmsen ('Nature as craftsman', pp. 480 ff.) acknowledge the significance of craft imagery in the work of Empedocles, where the philosopher endows the cosmic force of Love with technological skill. In fragment 73 Cypris kneads the earth like bread: 'As then Cypris, busily working on shapes [or, kinds of things] moistened earth in rain, /and gave it to swift fire to strengthen' (tr. McKirahan, p. 239).¹⁵² Fragment 96 also presents a striking craft image:

ἡ δὲ χθὼν ἐπίηρος ἐν εὐστέρνοις [εὐτύκτοις] χοάνοισι

τάς δύο τῶν ὀκτῶ μοιράων λάχε Νήστιδος αἴγλης,

τέσσαρα δ' Ἑφαιστοιο· τὰ δ' ὅστέα λευκὰ γέγοντο

Ἀρμονίης κόλλησιν ἀρηρότα θεσπεσίηθεν.

Pleasant earth in her wide [well-made] crucibles obtained
two parts of bright Nestis out of the eight,

¹⁵² Lloyd (*PA*, p. 274) comments, 'like a baker, perhaps, kneading and then baking bread', and compares the idea with that of fragment 34, which reads (tr. McKirahan, p. 239): 'Having glued barley-groats with water'.

and four of Hephaestus, and white bones came into being,
fitted together divinely by the glues of Harmonia
(tr. McKirahan).¹⁵³

Other technological imagery can be seen in Empedocles in both fragments 86 (where Aphrodite ‘fixes in eyes’ (ὀμματα ἐπηξεν) and 87 (where she creates by fastening or fixing parts together (γόμοις ἀσκήσασα καταστόργοις Ἀφροδίτη). Lloyd suggests that ‘the creative agents that appear in the work of Empedocles (and later in both Plato and Aristotle) develop from the traditional view of Hephaestus the craftsman god, who thus becomes for them “a mythical prototype”’ (p. 297).

2. Fathers

Zeus, as head of the Olympian family, is traditionally the ‘father’ of gods and human beings: πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, as Hesiod presents him in *Works and Days* (59). This notion of Zeus’ fatherhood overlaps with that of his political authority, as fatherhood was a common Greek image for kingship.¹⁵⁴ Brock notes references to Zeus as ‘father’ at *Iliad* 22.167; *Odyssey* 17.137; Homeric hymn to Demeter 6; *Theogony* 47 and 524. Pindar uses the title ‘father’ for Zeus at *Pythian* 4, 24. Louis (p. 169) cites the use of this image in *Iliad* 2.412; Aeschylus, *Septem* 412; and Sophocles, *Philoctetes* 1442. Zeus’ paternity is the source of both his primacy and authority over all the world. But the notion of fatherhood also suggests a generative power — a feature that is seized on by the philosophers when they develop the idea of a supreme divine force. In the context of cosmological speculation Greek philosophers often presented their principal substance or force as alive and as able to generate other living beings. Lloyd observes (p. 233):¹⁵⁵ ‘Two themes which recur in Greek philosophy from the Presocratic period onwards are the notion that the primary substance of things is in some sense instinct with life, and the idea that the world as a whole is (or at least is like) a living organism’. For example, Heraclitus speaks of the cosmos itself as πῦρ αἰεζῶν (‘an ever-living fire’) and presents a cycle of change where substances behave as animate beings. Similarly, Empedocles’ cosmic force of Love ‘is both modelled on, and indeed exemplified in, the biological attraction of the sexes’, and as such is the catalyst of creation.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ McKirahan, p. 240 (14.37 = DK96). Lloyd (*PA*, p. 274) observes that the term χάσνοι is used elsewhere of ‘the receptacles in which metal was melted, e.g. *Il.* 18.470 and Hes. *Th.* 863’ and that ‘Both ἀραρίσκω and κόλλω may refer to wood-working in particular’.

¹⁵⁴ R.W. Brock, ‘Political Imagery in Greek Literature before Plato’, pp. 49-52.

¹⁵⁵ Lloyd charts the development of ‘vitalist notions’ in Greek philosophy, *PA*, pp. 232-72.

¹⁵⁶ See Lloyd, *PA*, pp. 236-7 and 242-3.

3. Rulers and Governors

The gods are traditionally regarded as having control over human beings and their world. Lloyd has noted that there is among the Greeks 'an extensive and detailed pre-philosophical use of social imagery in describing the relations between the *gods*' (*PA*, p. 210), and that the early poets, Homer and Hesiod, were ready to apply social and political images as a result of the established conceptions of the gods as anthropomorphic beings and of Zeus as their king (p. 193 and p. 297). Brock has discussed the portrayal of gods as kings in Homer and Hesiod, and offers a very useful summary of references to Zeus as king (pp. 11-12):

Zeus is a Homeric king writ large; thus he is styled ἄναξ (*Il.* 1.502; *Th.* 493) and his rule is described as ἀνάσσειν (*Th.* 403, 491, 883), he is called βασιλεύς (*Th.* 897, Hes. fr. 308; *hDem.* 358, cp. βασιλευμέν (Th. 883), 'king in heaven' (*Od.* 24.473; *Th.* 71), 'king of the gods' (*Il.* 4.61, 18.366; *Th.* 74, 886, *WD.* 668, Hes. fr. 5, 308; Sc. 56, 328; *hMerc.* 367) and 'king of all gods and men' (*Il.* 2.667, 12.242; *Od.* 9.552, 13.25, 20.112; *Th.* 506).

On the nature of Zeus' rule in epic, Brock observes (p. 13):

Zeus' power is mainly sanctioned by his greater strength (*Il.* 4.56, 15.165; *Od.* 5.4; *Th.* 49, 403, Hes. fr. 308) and the threat of his violent anger (e.g. *Il.* 8.5f., 402f., 450f.; *Od.* 5.146-7, 13.148) . . . however, in Homer Zeus also bases his claim on primogeniture, like earthly kings, this being the basis of his greater wisdom (*Il.* 13.355). In keeping with his power, the gods are described by Ares as being subject to him (*Il.* 5.878, cp. 13.524-5), yet he is nowhere autocratic; he shows respect for other powers such as Night (*Il.* 14.261) and is careful to avoid antagonising other gods such as Poseidon and Hera when his plans conflict with their wishes (*Il.* 1.518f.; *Od.* 1.64f.).

As Brock notes, political power and authority are not restricted to Zeus alone but are shared by other deities such as Poseidon and Hades who control their own realms (pp. 12-13). Brock traces the development of these images in later literature, and again provides a comprehensive overview of references. He draws together key passages both from lyric and tragedy. On lyric (pp. 20-1):

After Homer, the description of gods in political terms becomes a literary commonplace, extended in scope to cover minor deities and abstractions, . . . In lyric, . . . it is chiefly Zeus who is glorified with royal status: he is βασιλεύς (Thgn. 285, 376; Sol. 31; Alc. 296.3, 387; [Lyr. Adesp. S460.14]; Pi. *I.* 8.20), ἀθανάτων βασιλεύς (Thgn. 743; Pi. *N.* 5.35, 10.16), οὐρανοῦ βασιλεύς (Pi. *N.* 4.67), πάντων βασιλεύς (Cor. 654. iii. 13), θεῶν βασιλεύς (Pi. *O.* 7.34, *N.* 7.82) and παμβασιλεύς (Alc. 308. b3-4; Stesich. S14.1-2 [suppl.]). More loosely, he is styled πάντων κύριος (Pi. *I.* 5.53), Ὀλύμπιον ἀρχαγὸν θεῶν (B. 5.179) and Ὀλύμπιος ἀγεμὼν (Pi. *O.* 9.57 . . .) His rule is spoken of as ἀνάσσειν (Thgn. 373, 803), and he receives the Homeric epithet εὐρύαναξ

(B. 5.19-20; Pi. O. 13.24); reminiscent of Homer also is οὐρανοῦ . . . κρέοντι (Pi. N. 3.10).

And on tragedy (p. 21):

in Aeschylus' *Supplikes* (595f. [. . .]) Zeus is said not to defer to any higher authority, or owe respect to any superior power, but to plan and act at will (cp. ἄναξ ἀνάκτων, 524) and in *Ag.* 509 he is described as ὑπατος τε χώρας Ζεύς. Likewise in *S. Phil.* 989 Odysseus calls Zeus ὁ τῆσδε γῆς κρατῶν, in *Ant.* 608 he is called δυνάστας, and in *O.T.* 903-5 the chorus appeal to Zeus as ὦ κρατύνων . . . Ζεῦ, πάντ' ἀνάσσων and speak of σάν ἀθάνατον αἰὲν ἀρχάν.¹⁵⁷

Lloyd has studied how these traditional ideas influenced various Greek philosophers who spoke of cosmological *substances* in imagery drawn from aspects of social or political organisation.¹⁵⁸ In the accounts of the philosophers Lloyd distinguishes three types of social or political imagery, as the relations between cosmological substances and forces are variously described as those of anarchy, oligarchy (or limited democracy) and monarchy (p. 213). It is the idea of monarchical government in the cosmos that forms the background to Plato's images of the gods as rulers, governors and guardians.

In fragment 53 Heraclitus speaks of the principle of Strife in terms previously applied to Zeus, head of the Olympian family: Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς ('War is the father of all, and king of all'). Anaximander in fragment 12 presents Mind as the supreme power which controls all things:

νοῦς δὲ ἐστὶν ἀπειρον καὶ αὐτοκρατὲς καὶ μέμεικται οὐδενὶ χρήματι, ἀλλὰ μόνος αὐτὸς ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ ἐστὶν . . . ἐστὶ γὰρ λεπτότατόν τε πάντων χρημάτων καὶ καθαρώτατον, καὶ γνώμην γε περὶ παντὸς πάσαν ἴσχει καὶ ἰσχύει μέγιστον· καὶ ὅσα γε ψυχὴν ἔχει, καὶ τὰ μείζω καὶ τὰ ἐλάσσω, πάντων νοῦς κρατεῖ. καὶ τῆς περιχωρήσιος τῆς συμπάσης νοῦς ἐκράτησεν, ὥστε περιχωρῆσαι τὴν ἀρχήν.

but Mind is unlimited and self-ruled and is mixed with no thing, but is alone and by itself . . . For it is the finest of all things and the purest, and it has all judgement about everything and the greatest power. And Mind rules all things that possess life — both the larger and the smaller. And Mind ruled the entire rotation, so that it rotated in the beginning (tr. McKirahan).

Diogenes of Apollonia also uses images of power for his supreme principle, Air (fragment 5): καὶ μοι δοκεῖ τὸ τὴν νόησιν ἔχον εἶναι ὁ ἄηρ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ὑπὸ τούτου πάντας καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν ('And in my opinion, that which possesses intelligence is what men call air, and all humans

¹⁵⁷ On the portrayal of Zeus as a tyrant in *Prometheus Bound*, see Podlecki, pp. 101-22.

¹⁵⁸ Lloyd, *PA*, ch. IV, pp. 210-232.

are governed by it and it rules all things', tr. McKirahan).¹⁵⁹ Some of the early Greek philosophers, then, use the language of monarchy and authoritarian rule that is familiar from the traditional conception of Zeus. But the philosophical use of images of political power differs from that in poetry in that the images are applied not to an anthropomorphic god but to abstract forces. Lloyd (*PA*, p. 298) sums up the difference between the poetic and philosophical conceptions of a divine ruling power: 'In Homer and Hesiod Zeus is supreme ruler, and his rule is largely (though not entirely) capricious, but in such philosophers as Anaxagoras, Diogenes of Apollonia and Plato the metaphor of supreme rule is applied not to any arbitrary deity but to the principle of order and rationality in things itself (Mind, Air-Intelligence, the cosmic Reason)'.

4. *Masters and Owners*

The idea that gods are the masters and owners of humankind is related to the idea of them as rulers in that it too confers on the gods power and control. But there are differences between these conceptions in that whereas the model of rulers presents gods as operating in a political sphere, the masters and owners model shifts the image to that of domestic control, with the gods acting as either the masters of human slaves or the owners of animals. The image of gods as masters and owners of human beings is closely tied to the political imagery of kings as masters and owners of their subjects. Brock has studied the development of this political imagery and observes (pp. 61-3):

Of the [political] images which first appear in Greek literature after Homer, the most striking is that which describes the king as master, and his subjects as his slaves. This image is widespread in the Near East . . . , and it is often found in Greek literature in connection with Persian affairs and ideology. [. . .] The image is commonly used in tragedy to suggest oriental despotism, particularly in Aeschylus' *Persae*, where the tone is strongly polemical¹⁶⁰ . . . The nature of Herodotus' material promotes frequent use of this image. At its simplest the image merely involves the styling of the king (Lydian or Persian) as δεσπότης, particularly as a form of address¹⁶¹ . . . The king's subjects are correspondingly referred to as slaves . . . The image continues in use at the end of the fifth century: the Hippocratic treatise 'On Airs, Waters and Places' has δεσπόζονται . . . ὑπὲρ τῶν δεσποτέων . . . οἱ δεσπότες . . . μὴ δεσπόζονται (16) of the inhabitants of Asia.

¹⁵⁹ McKirahan, p. 345 (17.5 = DK 5). For Brock on the political imagery in Anaxagoras and Diogenes, see pp. 35-6.

¹⁶⁰ Brock here refers to *Persae* 241-2, 586-7 and 666, and compares Euripides' *Helen* 275-6 and *Rhesus* 410-11.

¹⁶¹ Brock here refers to Herodotus 1.8.3, 11.4, 91.1, 115.2; 3.1.4, 34.2, 62.3; 7.5.2, 9.1, 147.3; 8.86α1, β1, 102.2; 9.111.3, 5, and 116.3.

Brock shows how the image of kings as masters is applied particularly to tyrants or tyrannical rulers¹⁶² and how Zeus in the *Prometheus Bound* is portrayed as an archetypal tyrant with the attendant language of mastery and enslavement (p. 68):

The same image is used in the *P.V.* to describe the tyranny of Zeus: δεσπόσειν 208, ὅσον τό τ' ἄρχειν καὶ τὸ δουλεύειν δίχα 927, δεσπόσειν 930, and this concept of the king of the gods is echoed in Euripides' *Heracles*, in the hero's attack on the 'baneful tales of poets': οὐδ' (sc. πείσομαι) ἄλλον ἄλλου δεσπότην πεφυκέναι (1344, referring to Theseus' consolation οὐ δεσμοῖσι διὰ τυραννίδα πατέρας ἐκηλίδωσαν; 1317-8).

Thus the poets take a well-established image of the king as master and adapt it easily to Zeus, king of gods and men.

The idea that gods are not only the masters of human 'slaves' but also the owners of human 'animals' also develops out of the political imagery of kingship. Brock notes the link between these two images in the political sphere (pp. 70-1):

The image of subjects as beasts of burden is clearly related to that of the king as master . . . This image is applied by Herodotus to the Persian conquest of external subjects. Persian kings are described as 'taming' (ἡμεροῦν) their enemies (4.118.5, 5.2.2, 7.5.2) and submission is referred to as 'bowing one's neck to the yoke' (ὑποκύπτειν; 1.130.1, 6.25.2, 109.3).

Brock cites uses of the image of taming animals for 'submission to a stronger ruler' in Pindar (*Pythian* 2, 51) and in tragedy (p. 72).¹⁶³

Closely related to this animal imagery of the ruler as able to 'tame' his subjects is the image of the ruler as a shepherd, which is established in epic. While sheep are, of course, domesticated animals, nevertheless, they can be unruly and can require the force of their herdsman to keep them in order. Brock comments (p. 46): 'The image of the king as "shepherd of the people" is one that occurs with great frequency but no variation'¹⁶⁴ in Homer and Hesiod as a formula at the end of a line. Its significance seems to lie not in ideas of pastoral care, but in the idea of directing and marshalling an unruly crowd'. Brock observes (p. 49) that in the early period the image does not 'make much progress towards the fourth century and Hellenistic idea of the ideal king as the good shepherd'.¹⁶⁵ Oswyn Murray¹⁶⁶ shows how the image of the king or God as

¹⁶² Brock traces this use of the image in tragedy: Euripides, *Heracles* 141-2, 251, 258, 270, 274; *Bacchae* 803; *Phoenissae* 520 (p. 67).

¹⁶³ Brock (p. 72) refers to: *P.V.* 671-2 (χαλινός); Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1639-42 (ζεῦξω); Sophocles, *Ant.* 290-2 (ζυγῶ) and 477-8 (χαλινῶ . . . ἵππους καταρτυθέντας) and *Aj.* 1253-4 (βοῦς . . . μάστιγος).

¹⁶⁴ In addition to the Homeric use, see also *Th.* 1000 and the Hesiodic fragments 23a34, 40.1, 141.19, 193.1 and 280.8 (Brock, p. 46).

¹⁶⁵ Brock contrasts the Homeric use of the shepherd image with writings from Egypt and the Near East, where (p. 46) 'ideas of care seem uppermost in the image'. See pp. 46-7 for references. He also tracks the political use of this image in the later Greek period (480-385 B.C.), notably in the comic tradition. Citing passages from Aristophanes in which the

a shepherd derives from the ancient Near East (p. 3)¹⁶⁷ and argues that its importance in the Greek tradition has been exaggerated as a result of scholars' familiarity with biblical usage (pp. 5-6):

Here I only wish to emphasize that the biblical image of the shepherd-king, whether it refers to God or men, is by far the most coherent that survives from the ancient world, and occupies a place that appears to be far more central in the conception of kingship than for any earlier civilization. [. . .] In contrast it must be admitted that the image of the herdsman is by no means as important in the Greek tradition as modern writers, influenced by their Christian education and by the desire to find relations between Christianity and classical culture, have suggested. It is true that the image existed in the Homeric world, in the formulaic phrase of Homeric epic referring to kings, *poimena laon*, . . . and this phrase, itself perhaps a reflection of influence from the East, ensured that the comparison of king and shepherd was part of a common stock of literary motifs. But little is made of this epithet in the long tradition of Homeric exegesis, . . . and it was not particularly emphasised in the kingship literature which developed from the fourth century BC onwards. It took its place alongside a stock of other metaphors for royal power, such as the father, the doctor, the pilot of a ship, or the sun among the stars.

Murray's assessment of the shepherd image of God as one among a common stock in Greek literature is indeed borne out by Platonic usage.

5. Helmsmen

In the early Greek literary tradition Zeus is represented as a helmsman. Pindar uses the image at the conclusion to *Pythian* 5 (122-3): Διὸς τοι νόος μέγας κυβερνα/δαίμον' ἀνδρῶν φίλων ('Truly the great mind of Zeus steers the fortune of men who are dear to him', tr. Race) and in *Pythian* 4 (274) it is used of an unnamed god as the poet tells how it is a hard struggle to put the affairs of a city right once they have been disrupted εἰ μὴ θεὸς ἀγεμόνεσσι κυβερνατὴρ γένηται ('unless suddenly a god becomes a helmsman for the leaders', tr. Race).¹⁶⁸ The image is also applied to Athena in Sopho-

demos is likened to sheep (*Vesp.* 32, 34; *Eq.* 264 and *Nub.* 1203), he comments that the image is used 'to suggest a lack of independence'. He further notes (p. 134): 'There is an underlying assumption that now the *demos* is master of its political destiny it should not need a ποιμήν λαῶν; the dominant tone, however, is of stupidity, for which sheep were (and are) proverbial'.

¹⁶⁶ O. Murray, 'The idea of the shepherd king from Cyrus to Charlemagne'. I am grateful to Roger Brock for bringing this robust article to my attention.

¹⁶⁷ Louis also notes the eastern origins, commenting (p. 172, n.44) that the image of God as a shepherd is known to the Hittites. He comments that Plato seems to have derived the image from Philolaos and that it can be found in the *Prometheus Bound* (229-31).

¹⁶⁸ On the use of the helmsman image in Pindar, see B.K. Braswell, *A Commentary on the Fourth Pythian Ode of Pindar*, p. 376, who notes that the image has been studied in detail

cles' *Ajax* (35), as Odysseus professes to the goddess, 'I am steered by your hand' (σῆ κυβερνώμαι χερί).¹⁶⁹ The use of 'steering' as an image for government can be associated with the widespread use of maritime imagery for politics in Greek literature. Brock discusses the general use of such imagery in lyric poetry (pp. 80-85) before turning to the particular figure of the helmsman (p. 86):

The earliest reference to the statesman as the helmsman of the ship of state which can be reliably dated is the oracle to Solon (nr.15PW; c.595B.C.): ἦσο μέσῃν κατὰ νῆα κυβερνητήριον ἔργον εὐθύνων· πολλοί τοι Ἀθηναίων ἐπίκουροι. As we shall see, the image of the helmsman is almost entirely confined to individuals in a position of sole direction.¹⁷⁰

Since in political terms the image of the helmsman is for the most part used of monarchs, it is not surprising to find Greek authors applying it to the supreme divine power. Brock sets out the major references and identifies the main grounds of this comparison as those of control and superior skill (pp. 89-90):

The image [of the helmsman] is almost always used of monarchs . . . It finds ready parallels in passages concerned with divine guidance or control (A. *Ag.* 182, *PV* 515; S. *Aj.* 35; Tr. *Adesp.* fr. 348g; Pi. *O.* 12.3, *P.* 4.274, fr. 40, 214; B. 13.185; Epimenides fr. 256K; Antiphon 1.13 . . . Though the basic notion seems to be one of control, . . . this is usually linked to notions of superior skill or wisdom, and the generally favourable tone of the earlier, lyric examples implies that this is an image which arose in aristocratic circles, as a comfortable view of themselves.

The notion of a divine force 'steering' or 'piloting' (κυβερνᾶν, οὐακίξειν) the universe is well established in Presocratic philosophy. Lloyd comments (*PA*, pp. 272-3): 'The image probably occurs first in cosmology in Anaximander . . . But thereafter it is one of the favourite images of the Presocratics, occurring in Heraclitus (who uses both κυβερνᾶν in Fr. 41, and οὐακίξειν in Fr. 64), in Parmenides (Fr. 12) and in Diogenes of Apollonia (Fr. 5)'. For Heraclitus the universe is subject to a regulating force of

in a dissertation by K.H. Kaiser (*Das Bild des Steuermannes in der antiken Literatur*). On sea imagery in Pindar, see Jacques Péron, *Les images maritimes de Pindare*.

¹⁶⁹ Lloyd (*PA*, p. 273) refers also to the use of this image in the Hippocratic treatise *On Regimen* (I, ch. 10, L VI 486 10). Louis (p. 171) points out that the epithet ὑψηλόθρονος ('high-throned') used of Zeus in epic (*Il.* 4.166, 7.69; see also 18.185 and Hes. *Op.* 18) is also a term from seafaring, since it refers primarily to rowers and is literally translated as 'seated high on the benches'. Louis also cites the use of this image for Zeus at *Symp.* 197b, which is taken to be a fragment from an unknown poet (Ζεύς κυβερνᾶν θεῶν τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων).

¹⁷⁰ Brock (pp. 87-8) refers to occurrences of the helmsman image at Pindar *Pyth.* 10.72 and in tragedy, where it is widely used, e.g. (Aesch.) *Pers.* 656; *Septem* 2-2, 62-4 and 652; (Soph.) *OT* 922-3; *Ant.* 994 and (Eurip.) *Suppl.* 473-4 and 879-80. By the time of the usages in Euripides Brock comments that 'the image has become fairly hackneyed' (p. 88). Also later he observes (p. 90), 'While tragedy develops the details of the "ship of state" . . . , the image of the helmsman has effectively reached its final form with Aeschylus, and indeed given the conventional monarchy of tragedy one would not expect novelty'.

change, which sometimes he calls simply the *logos* (see e.g. fragments 1, 2, 10, 50, 114). In some fragments this cosmic force is identified with other entities: fire (30, 66, 90), strife (53, 80) and with Zeus himself (32). Heraclitus further blurs the distinction between his supreme force and the traditional conception of Zeus by borrowing the established idea of Zeus as the divine helmsman with its depiction of absolute control as that of 'steering'. Fragment 41 reads: ἐν τὸ σοφόν, ἐπίστασθαι γνώμην, ὅτι ἐκυβέρνησε πάντα διὰ πάντων ('Wisdom is one thing, to be skilled in true judgement, how all things are steered through all things', tr. McKirahan).¹⁷¹ Further, fragment 64 draws a direct parallel between Zeus the god of the lightning flash and Heraclitus' own conception of cosmic fire, as it is said: τὰ δὲ πάντα οἰακίζει κεραυνός ('Thunderbolt steers all things'). Parmenides in fragment 12 uses the image of steering for divine control when he speaks of a 'goddess who steers all things': δαίμων ἢ πάντα κυβερνᾷ. For Diogenes of Apollonia the supreme cosmic force is that of Air, and this is said to 'steer' all things (fragment 5): καί μοι δοκεῖ τὸ τὴν νόησιν ἔχον εἶναι ὁ ἄηρ καλούμενος ὑπο τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ ὑπο τούτου πάντας καὶ κυβερνᾶσθαι καὶ πάντων κρατεῖν ('And it seems to me that that which has intelligence is what men call air, and that all men are steered by this and that it has power over all things', tr. KRS,¹⁷² p. 442).

IV. Plato's Models for the Gods: Creators and Controllers

Plato's images and metaphors express his conception of a divine force that creates and controls the universe. In order to establish the cognitive significance of his major models and metaphors, the first task is to set out the information that they present about God or the gods.

1. Plato's Divine Craftsmen

The model of a single god or plural gods as craftsmen is the most developed and most frequent of Plato's divine images,¹⁷³ appearing in the *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Republic*, *Protagoras*, *Critias*, *Philebus* and *Laws*, as well as dominating the *Timaeus* through its myth of creation.

At *Sophist* 265c3-4 the Stranger speaks of a craftsman god when, referring to all animals and plants, he asks: μὴν ἄλλου τινὸς ἢ θεοῦ δημιουργοῦντος φήσομεν ὅστερον γίνεσθαι πρότερον οὐκ ὄντα; ('Must we not attribute the coming-into-being of things out of not-being to divine craftsmanship and nothing else?', tr. Cornford). The figure of the Demiurge appears also at: *Politicus* 270a5 and 273b1 (τοῦ δημιουργοῦ) in the context of the myth of the rotation of the universe; *Republic* 530a6 ('the artisan of heaven', τῷ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ δημιουργῷ); 596b12 (τὸν δημιουργόν);

¹⁷¹ McKirahan, p. 120 (10.44 = DK41).

¹⁷² KRS = Kirk, Raven and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*.

¹⁷³ See Chapter 2, note 129 for Grube's useful remark on single and plural gods in Plato.

and 507c6-7 (the 'creator of the senses', τὸν τῶν αἰσθήσεων δημιουργόν).¹⁷⁴ However, it is in the creation myth of the *Timaeus* that the idea of God the craftsman receives its fullest expression and development. The prevalence of technological imagery in the *Timaeus* is well known and documented,¹⁷⁵ and critics have explored the significance of the Demiurge in numerous books and articles.¹⁷⁶ The first task, then, is to summarise the relevant conclusions on the model of the craftsman and its presentation of God.

The craftsman model highlights two important features of Plato's creation myth: first, that the universe was not created out of nothing; and second, that imperfections exist not as a result of divine negligence but as a result of the limitations of the material with which the divine craftsman must work. Lloyd sets out the issue clearly (*PA*, p. 279):

The Craftsman in the *Timaeus* does not create the world *ex nihilo*, but like human artisans he works on material which already exists in an unformed or chaotic state. He is not omnipotent but achieves the best possible results within the limitations imposed by the nature of the material itself (e.g. *Ti.* 48a) and here too his situation (one might also say his predicament) corresponds to that of his human counterparts.

The craftsman represents Plato's belief in an intelligent, beneficent cause which has certain limiting influences working against its aim to achieve 'the good' in every sphere (Lloyd, *PA*, p. 282, p. 284), and conveys the conception of 'the element of rational design or finality which is manifest in the universe' (Lloyd, p. 291). Also the metaphor allows Plato to express his idea of a separate moving cause quite distinct from the material which he brings into order from disorder (Lloyd, p. 291).

Solmsen ('Nature as craftsman', pp. 483-4) argues that the Demiurge cannot be understood apart from Plato's understanding of the process of craftsmanship, citing a passage from the *Gorgias* (503e) which emphasises the element of order and organisation in the craftsman's work, a passage from *Republic* 10 where the human craftsman is said to look at the Forms while engaging in his work, and finally a section of *Laws* where Plato insists that 'every skilled craftsman does all things for the sake of the

¹⁷⁴ For other references see appendix 1.

¹⁷⁵ Lloyd (*PA*, pp. 276-9) observes that the craftsman metaphor is developed in its greatest detail in the *Tim.* and that this dialogue provides an 'extraordinary variety' of technological imagery, both in the use of general terms such as μηχανάομαι (devise) and τεκταίνομαι (construct) and in 'a whole series of images drawn from specific arts or crafts' (p. 277). Lloyd mentions various individual images — such as the gods working on lathes (τορνεύεσθαι), glueing or fastening things together (κολλᾶν, γόμφοι) and modelling (πλάττειν) (p. 277). A fuller list can be found in appendix 1.

¹⁷⁶ See e.g.: Brisson, *Le même et l'autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon*, ('Le démiurge', pp. 27-106); Mohr, 'Plato's theology reconsidered: what the Demiurge does'; Solmsen, 'Nature as craftsman in Greek thought'; Classen, 'The Creator in Greek thought from Homer to Plato'; Morrow, 'The Demiurge in politics'; and Cornford, *Plato's Cosmology*.

whole'.¹⁷⁷ Solmsen sees the elements of order, intrinsic harmony and the good as the basis of Plato's concept of the divine Craftsman (pp. 485 ff.), and explains how Plato draws on the idea of the craftsman as responsible for creating form in his material and for providing direction in the creative process. All in all, Solmsen regards Plato as aware of the craftsman as 'proceeding consistently towards a pre-established end' and as a practitioner who 'knows what he is doing'.

Classen's view is that the Demiurge is 'a mythological expression of a philosophical conception' ('The Creator in Greek thought', p. 19), that is, 'a personification of the ἀγαθὸν αἴτιον' (p. 17). Classen interprets the Demiurge as a representation of two factors, causation and insight, which though 'essential to Plato's understanding of the cosmogony' cannot be accounted for 'in strictly scientific terms'. For Classen the Demiurge is (p. 18): 'a *deus ex machina*, a convenient device to make intelligible what cannot be explained otherwise, in a form reminiscent of traditional mythology; one might call him a product of philosophical mythology'.¹⁷⁸ Classen's point that the Demiurge provides a necessary link between the eternal and created world is clearly correct. For through his access to the model (the eternal Forms), the creator shapes the gods who in turn form the rest of the world, and thus 'a kind of cosmogonical hierarchy' is built up (pp. 18-19). Classen's conclusion offers a useful summary of the cognitive role of this metaphor (p. 19):

the demiurge represents two factors in the cosmogony of the *Timaeus*, the force that starts the development towards order and the foresight and skill which guides it so that order or cosmos is achieved. His nature can only be explained in view of the whole account of the *Timaeus*; he is neither a creative god like the god of the Old Testament, nor the eternal ruler of the universe, but a philosophical abstraction — not worshipped or designed to be worshipped. For Plato introduces the demiurge not because he wants to replace the traditional belief in the Olympians by a philosophical religion, but because the demiurge proves to be the most convenient form of explanation within the myth for that which science cannot account for.

One minor point, however, must be qualified: the Demiurge is not to be explained only by the context of the *Timaeus*. For he also appears in other dialogues, such as the *Republic* and *Politicus*, and presents a view of the creator which is relevant not only in the *Timaeus* but in Plato's philosophy as a whole. To sum up the accounts of the commentators, then, the figure of the divine craftsman allows Plato to express certain features of his view of the creation of the universe:

(1) that it was created through the agency and design of an intelligent, skilful and beneficent cause;

¹⁷⁷ *Rep.* 596b and *Laws* 903c.

¹⁷⁸ For a useful discussion on the much-debated question of whether Plato's craftsman is a mythical figure (and if so, in what sense), see Lloyd, *PA*, pp. 279-81.

- (2) that it was not created *ex nihilo*;
- (3) that imperfections are the result not of the creator's negligence or lack of skill but of the imperfect nature of his material;
- (4) that the cause is separate from the universe;
- (5) that the process of creation consisted of the replacement of disorder with order and harmony;
- (6) that the creator sought to make the universe like the Forms;

and

- (7) that creation was the work of a single agent.

The question of the status of the Demiurge has been vigorously discussed and some have seen this figure as more than a mere image for Plato. Classen, for example, considers the way in which the Demiurge is introduced into the *Timaeus* (at 28b-c) and argues that the figure becomes 'factual' for Plato. At 28b-c Timaeus voices the view that anything created must be created by a cause — a comment which leads on to the issue of what the cause of the world is. On this question Classen comments ('The Creator in Greek thought', p. 16):

This, however, is not asked but instead Timaeus says that the father and maker of all is difficult to find and describe, thus implying that the αἷτιον is a 'πατήρ' and 'ποιητής' or, in the next sentence, 'τεκτονόμενος', a term which is obviously suggested by the comparison with the craftsman (28AC f.).

The image is indeed introduced in an oblique way, but I do not accept Classen's further claim that Plato takes his image as 'factual' (p. 16):

The demiurge first mentioned in an analogy is suddenly taken into the sphere of the actual subject of the description without any justification, or, to put it differently, a third assumption is made by implication, namely that the αἷτιον is to be conceived of as a demiurge. This is never proved nor even clearly stated, but gradually introduced: we conclude that Plato steps over the limit of the analogy and appears to take as factual what is true only on the level of the comparison.

The image of the creator as craftsman certainly dominates the *Timaeus*, but it is never claimed that the Demiurge is 'factual' in any way. Indeed it is made clear at 28c that it is a 'hard task' to discover the nature of the creator. Also, Classen's distinction between what is factually true and 'what is true only on the level of the comparison' raises — but does not address — the issue of the truth-status of metaphors and images. Leaving aside the matter of what exactly 'factual truth' is or how it could be proved in theological speculation, in what sense is the figure of the Demiurge 'true on the level of the comparison'? Even if one believes that there are correspondences between a creator God and the Demiurge, surely one cannot actually prove that these correspondences exist. Thus on what basis can it be claimed that the figure or role of the Demi-

urge is true *even* at the level of comparison? How is one to understand the concept of truth within transcendental imagery? The most that can be claimed, in my view, is that the nature and activities of the Demiurge are consistent with beliefs that Plato expresses about the role of divinity in the physical universe. While the issue of the *truth* about divine power and causation is clearly a valid issue for debate, the concept of truth — whether factual or (merely) on the level of comparison — is out of place in any assessment of the significance of metaphors and images for divinity.

2. Plato's Divine Fathers

The paternal image of God or the gods is used mostly in the *Timaeus* (see appendix 1) but also occurs in the *Politicus* in a passage which will be analysed in Chapter 4. Like the craftsman, the father model presents an account of creative power and process and conveys the idea that the cause is essentially separate from the world. At *Timaeus* 28c the cause of the universe is spoken of as its father, and the metaphor is developed at 37c, as the universe is referred to as a living creature (37c6-7):

Ὡς δὲ κινηθὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησεν τῶν αἰδίων θεῶν γεγονότος ἀγαλμα ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ, ἡγάσθη

When the father who had begotten it saw it set in motion and alive, a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods, he was delighted with it (tr. Cornford, adapted).

This development of the father model which shifts the focus to the product of creation as a child is significant in a number of ways. First, the universe is now a rational, living being and as such can be regarded as having its own soul. Lloyd (*PA*, pp. 254-71) discusses how the image of a personified universe relates to Plato's concept of a world-soul and regards it as serving alongside the craftsman image 'to convey Plato's belief in the prevailing element of design in the universe' (p. 256).¹⁷⁹ Lloyd discusses this 'vitalist doctrine' in Plato and other Greek thinkers and points out how the idea of the world as a living creature has certain implications (p. 265): 'the conception of the world as a living organism not only conveyed an idea of the universe as a single whole (made up of interrelated parts), but also enabled an account to be given of its development in terms of a natural growth or evolution'. The second significant point about the development of the God:universe::father:child analogy is that it presents a very close relationship between creator and created. When at *Timaeus* 37c the creator is delighted (ἡγάσθη) on seeing the universe 'moving and living', the image conveys the emotion of a father as he looks upon the new-born child to which he has given life. The closeness of the father/child relationship accounts for the creator's care for the universe and so, unlike the craftsman image, offers compelling reason why God is

¹⁷⁹ Lloyd (*PA*, p. 255) notes the use of the same metaphor at *Polit.* 269d1, where the universe is spoken of as 'a living being endowed with reason by him who fitted it together in the beginning'.

involved with the universe not only at its beginning but also throughout its 'life'. The father metaphor also presents an image of authority and so explains why human beings, as part of creation, should be obedient and respectful to God. Because it denotes procreation and paternal authority, the father metaphor is an effective image of both creation and control.

In the *Timaeus* the single creator God is characterised not only as the father of the universe as a whole but also as the father of the lesser gods, whom he created and to whom he entrusts much of the work in the creation of the world and humankind. From this it follows that the lesser gods are his children (παῖδες) and are obedient to him (οἱ παῖδες τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς τάξιν ἐπειθόντο αὐτῇ, 42e). Classen's observation that the craftsman god builds up 'a kind of cosmogonical hierarchy' between the eternal and created worlds is relevant also in the case of the father metaphor. For not only are the lesser gods the children of the creator but also in the course of the dialogue they themselves become the 'begetters' of the mortal races, as their father instructs them to 'produce and beget mortals' (ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῶα καὶ γεννάτε, 41d2). Through the procreation metaphor a hierarchy is established between humans and gods, as the mortal races become the children of the lesser gods and thus the grandchildren of the single creator God. The metaphor of the lesser gods as children also provides the reason why they are as concerned as their father to produce the good in creation. For at 71d these gods are characterised as obedient children remembering their father's instructions (71d5-7): μεμνημένοι γὰρ τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐπιστολῆς οἱ συστήσαντες ἡμᾶς, ὅτε τὸ θνητὸν ἐπέστελλεν γένος ὡς ἄριστον εἰς δύναμιν ποιεῖν ('For our makers remembered their father's injunction to make the mortal race as perfect as possible', tr. Cornford). So the lesser gods' concern to produce good in the world stems ultimately from their father's wish that the world produced be the best possible, a wish that is turned into a command which they must dutifully obey.¹⁸⁰

The father metaphor presents a number of significant features of Plato's view of the relationship between God and the universe:

- (1) the universe as a child of God is a rational, whole creature, whose development can be understood in terms of natural growth;
- (2) as father of the universe and of humankind God is invested with paternal authority;
- (3) God is concerned for the welfare of his child throughout its life;
- (4) the lesser gods as children of the creator and parents of humankind provide a link between the supreme divinity and mortal nature;

and

- (5) in their work the lesser gods observe their father's wish to create the best possible universe.

¹⁸⁰ For references to the universe, lesser gods and human beings as children, see appendix 1.

Of the five main models, that of the father best combines the features of creative power, control and benevolent care that Plato attributes to his supreme God. The craftsman and father models are Plato's only depictions of the creative power of God, while the next three models concentrate on God as a controlling force.

3. *Plato's Divine Rulers and Governors*

This group of models presents the gods as active in the affairs of the world just as political rulers in the affairs of a state. A passage in *Laws* 10 demonstrates how the conception of the gods as rulers arises from the belief that they control the universe (905e2-3): ἀρχοντας μὲν ἀναγκαῖόν που γίγνεσθαι τοὺς γε διοικῆσοντας τὸν ἅπαντα ἐντελεχῶς οὐρανόν ('Well, if they are going to run the entire universe for ever, presumably they'll have to be rulers', tr. Saunders). Lloyd deals extensively with this image in his account of social and political images in Greek cosmological theories (*PA*, ch. IV) and refers to some of these metaphors as used by Plato: in the *Timaeus* reason is represented as 'controlling' (ἀρχεῖν) necessity (48a) and the Craftsman is said to 'issue ordinances' (διαθεσμοθετήσας, διατάξας, 42d2, e5); in the *Philebus* (28c) it is said that all wise men agree that 'reason is for us the king of heaven and earth' (νοῦς ἐστὶ βασιλεὺς ἡμῖν οὐρανοῦ τε καὶ γῆς);¹⁸¹ in the *Laws* (896d and e) soul is said to 'administer' (διοικεῖν) the heaven, the 'best soul' takes care of the whole cosmos (ἐπιμελεῖσθαι, 897c), and later (904a) there is a further brief reference to 'our king' (βασιλεὺς), who takes care of the universe. A fuller list of references is to be found in appendix 1.

Lloyd raises the question of how far the cosmological images of the philosophers reflect their own political views and on Plato observes (p. 222): 'Plato's rejection of democracy of the Athenian type at least, is well known and his anti-democratic, authoritarian bias is evidently reflected in the image of a supreme (but benevolent) ruler which he uses to describe the role of Reason in the cosmos'. Thus Plato's images of a supreme ruler god would seem to reflect his views on human political and social matters. Lloyd also addresses the question of how far Plato was aware of the metaphorical nature of his socio-political images for the gods. He tells how Plato made a firm distinction between figurative and non-figurative accounts (pp. 225-6) and expresses his view that (p. 226): 'there can be no doubt that he was aware of using εἰκόνες when he refers to the "king" who "takes care of" the whole world, just as he is when he speaks of the Craftsman or the Father of all things'. Although these metaphors are not to be taken as factual statements about the nature of the gods, they nevertheless convey Plato's deep convictions that (a) a particular order exists in the universe and (b) that this order is apparent at both the human and cosmic levels (Lloyd, pp. 226-7).

¹⁸¹ Other political images for the cause of the universe are used at *Phil.* 28d, 30c and 30d.

De Marignac's contribution on these metaphors of social and political power concerns the particular relationship that they establish between gods and humans — a relationship, that is, of authority on one side and obedience on the other.¹⁸² De Marignac classes together the domestic, military¹⁸³ and political images of the gods' rule over humankind, as they are all founded upon the idea of authority and obedience. For de Marignac, Plato uses these metaphors to convey both the supremacy of God, which gives him the right to rule, and the subordination of human beings, which obliges them to obey him.

Since good government seems to have been regarded by Plato as a τέχνη,¹⁸⁴ this group of metaphors, like the craftsman group, represents Plato's belief in an intelligent, guiding force at work in the universe. That this force is benevolent is axiomatic for Plato,¹⁸⁵ although the image of rulers and kings does not necessarily entail benevolence.

4. Plato's Divine Masters and Owners

This group of images presents the gods as masters of humankind and human beings as the property of the gods. At *Phaedo* 62b6-8 Socrates introduces this idea when he says:

οὐ μέντοι ἀλλὰ τόδε γέ μοι δοκεῖ, ὦ Κέβης, εἶδέν λεγέσθαι, τὸ θεοῦ εἶναι ἡμῶν τοὺς ἐπιμελουμένους καὶ ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ἐν τῶν κτημάτων τοῖς θεοῖς εἶναι.

but still, Cebes, this much seems to me well said: it is gods who care for us, and for the gods we human beings are among their belongings (tr. Gallop).

In *Laws* the same point is made as the Athenian observes (902b): Θεῶν γε μὴν κτήματά φαμεν εἶναι πάντα ὅποσα θνητὰ ζῶα, ὥνπερ καὶ τὸν οὐρανὸν ὅλον ('And we regard all mortal creatures as possessions of gods, like the universe as a whole', tr. Saunders). This image is based on the idea of the power of the gods over human beings and in this respect is similar to the model of the gods as rulers. However, despite the parallels between political and domestic control, there are also significant differences. First, whereas ruling is a recognised τέχνη which the ruler must prove he can exercise competently, being master of a household is not recognised as a

¹⁸² De Marignac observes (with reference to passages at *Alc. I* 124c, *Apol.* 28e and *Laws* 904a) that, in order to express the pre-eminence of God, Plato uses images from domestic, military and political hierarchies (pp. 64-6).

¹⁸³ Although the political and domestic images occur throughout the dialogues, the image of the gods as military commanders only appears in two passages: (a) *Apol.* 28e, as noted by de Marignac (p. 63; see also *Apol.* 33c4 and c7); and (b) *Laws* 905e ff. in the list of rulers that are suggested as possible comparisons for the gods. *Laws* 905e will be discussed below in Chapter 4.

¹⁸⁴ See e.g. *Polit.* 301a.

¹⁸⁵ See e.g. *Laws* 899b, 900d-e and 901e.

particular skill, and the master is not required to prove his competence. Second, while a good ruler is concerned for the welfare of his citizens, such concern is not a necessary feature of the master/slave relationship. Considered in this way the image of the gods as masters is rather less complimentary than that of rulers. Although for Plato the gods are indeed 'the very best of masters' (*Phaedo* 62d, οἵπερ ἀριστοὶ εἰσιν τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστάται, θεοί; and *Phaedrus* 273e-274a, οὐ . . . ὁμοδούλοις δεῖ χαρίζεσθαι μελετᾶν τὸν νοῦν ἔχοντα . . . ἀλλὰ δεσπόταις ἀγαθοῖς τε καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν),¹⁸⁶ still the role of the master necessarily requires less competence and skill than that of head of state. This is not to say, however, that the master image is a pale imitation of that of ruler, for this model adds something very distinctive to the portrayal of the relationship between gods and human beings.

Although both citizen and slave must accept the command of a higher authority, the degree of autonomy in each case is quite different. Slaves have no rights and no freedom and take no part at all in decisions that affect every aspect of their lives and circumstances.¹⁸⁷ Thus the image of humankind as the slaves of the gods expresses in very strong terms the view that the gods wield enormous power over the lives of humans and that human autonomy is severely limited. This gulf in status between gods and human beings is expressed in another arresting image at *Laws* (803c) where humankind is spoken of as a 'plaything' (παίγνιον) of God.¹⁸⁸ The model of the gods as masters emphasises the distance between human and divine in terms of power and status. Despite the shared motif of authority, the master model offers a different picture both from that of the gods as rulers and from that of the gods as fathers. For in this case there is no love, joy, care or common identity. Indeed without the belief that the gods are benevolent, the image of the master gods presents something of a nightmarish vision.

Linked with the notion of the gods as the masters and owners of human beings is the image of the gods as shepherds, which again expresses their utter superiority and control. However, whereas in earlier Greek literature the shepherd image did not suggest the notions of care and concern, in the fourth century the image was developed in political writings to express the character of the ideal king who would both guide and be concerned about the welfare of his subjects.¹⁸⁹ Plato uses the image of the gods as

¹⁸⁶ This statement refers to the gods who are mentioned explicitly at 273e7 (θεοῖς).

¹⁸⁷ For the view of slavery as a condition that men 'fear more than death' (δουλείαν θανάτου μᾶλλον φοβημένους), see *Rep.* 387b and 496b.

¹⁸⁸ De Marignac (p. 68) regards the image of the plaything as akin to that of God as a draughtsplayer (ὁ πεττεύτης) at *Laws* 903d in that both convey the idea that the liberty of human beings is extremely restricted. However, the whole point of the passage at 903d is that it is the actions of the souls themselves that determine whether they move up or down in the scale of lives and the 'mover of the pieces' actually ends up with a mere mechanical role: οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἔργον τῷ πεττευτῇ λείπεται πλὴν μετατιθέναι τὸ μὲν ἀμεινον γιγνόμενον ἥθος εἰς βελτίω τόπον, χεῖρον δὲ εἰς τὸν χεῖρονα ('the divine draughtsplayer has nothing else to do except promote a soul with a promising character to a better situation, and to relegate one that is deteriorating to an inferior', tr. Saunders).

¹⁸⁹ See Brock, pp. 46-49.

shepherds in the *Politicus*, *Critias* and *Laws* (see appendix 1 for references). In the *Politicus* the Stranger tells a story of a great upheaval in the universe and describes how in one era daemons controlled the different regions. As he explains how these daemons govern, he speaks of them as shepherds (271d5-e3):

καὶ δὴ καὶ τὰ ζῷα κατὰ γένη καὶ ἀγέλας οἷον νομῆς θεῖοι διειλήφεσαν
δαίμονες, αὐτάρκης εἰς πάντα ἕκαστος ἕκάστοις ὧν οἷς αὐτὸς ἔνεμεν,
ὥστε οὐτ' ἀγρίον ἦν οὐδὲν οὔτε ἀλλήλων ἐδωδαί, πόλεμός τε οὐκ ἐνῆν
οὐδὲ στάσις τὸ παράπαν·

moreover, divine spirits had divided living things between them, like herdsmen, by kind and by herd, each by himself providing independently for all the needs of those he tended, so that none of them was savage, nor did they eat each other, and there was no war or internal dissent at all; (tr. Rowe).

This golden age picture presents a world where divine forces take care of all the needs of living beings. The shepherd image¹⁹⁰ introduced by the simile οἷον νομῆς is continued in the use of the verb ἔνεμεν. Since this verb means both 'sway, manage, wield control' and 'pasture, drive to pasture', Plato is able to exploit its ambiguity in the context of shepherd governors in order to suggest a very close relationship between the two activities of governing and shepherding. For example, at 271e νέμω is used alongside both ἐπιστατέω (have charge of, preside over) and νομεύω (pasture, drive to pasture)¹⁹¹ as the Stranger describes divine control over human lives (271e5-7):

θεὸς ἔνεμεν αὐτοὺς αὐτὸς ἐπιστατῶν, καθάπερ νῦν ἄνθρωποι, ζῷον ὃν ἕτερον θεϊότερον, ἄλλα γένη φαυλότερα αὐτῶν νομεύουσι·

A god tended them, taking charge of them himself, just as now human beings, themselves a kind of living creature, but different and more divine, pasture other kinds of living creatures more lowly than themselves (tr. Rowe).

The divine spirits in the *Politicus* myth have in this era been given their authority by the supreme God. They have total control over their flocks and in this respect the image is similar to that of the gods as rulers. However, as the myth also portrays the shepherd gods in this first era catering to the needs of a defenceless and dependent humankind, clearly their role is going beyond that of a ruler — and moreover, far beyond that of a master. The myth of the *Politicus* serves the greater aim of the dialogue to find an appropriate model for the human statesman. In the myth, during the era when the divine spirits shepherd humankind, human beings are presented as completely defenceless and dependent on the gods for their needs. In this 'golden era' they

¹⁹⁰ On Plato's use of the shepherd image in the *Polit.*, see Lane pp. 40–46. On his general use of the image, she observes (p. 45): 'The model of the king as shepherd was ingrained in Greek culture by the *Iliad*. [...] Indeed most of Plato's political discussions take up the model of shepherding at some point, though the polemical force of the model varies with each context'. Shepherding is used as an image for government in four dialogues: *Rep.* (345a–347a) and *Polit.*, *Crit.* and *Laws*, as discussed below.

¹⁹¹ See also the use of the verb at 271e8 and 274b5.

are totally sheltered and protected. But this situation changes after the 'great reversal' (272e-273a) when the supreme God relinquishes control of the universe's rotation and withdraws. From this point on human beings must learn to fend for themselves and it is in this period (in the myth) that humans develop the arts of survival and of civilisation, including politics.¹⁹² As the interlocutors search for an appropriate model for the good statesman, they dismiss the notion that a statesman could act like the early divine spirits in being the shepherd who tends to all the needs of his flock. For this is too all-embracing a role for the statesman and one that his (human) subjects do not require of him (274e-277a). In this way in the *Politicus* Plato adopts the notion of the governor gods as shepherds, but having analysed it within his own mythic scenario ultimately rejects it as an appropriate model for the human statesman.¹⁹³ In the *Critias* the image of the gods as shepherds is used alongside the notion of men as their 'possessions' (κτήματα) and again features in a golden age scenario. In the *Laws* the shepherd image is used in the list of possible comparisons for the gods at 905d-907b, where again it is used alongside the notions that the gods are the masters and owners of humankind (see 906b) and that they are our kindly protectors. These passages from the *Critias* and *Laws* will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

The notions of care and concern that are part of the shepherd image in Plato make the relationship between gods and humans closer to that suggested by the father/child model. But there are still important differences between the two. First, in the shepherd image there is the non-generative aspect which sets up a more distant relation between the parties concerned. Second, the shepherd/flock metaphor reduces human beings to the level of animals, which establishes a fixed, hierarchical order (more akin to the master/slave model). Third, shepherding, unlike parenting, is a recognised τέχνη and thus can present the gods as exercising professional skill and judgement in their control over human affairs. In the next group of images the key motif is again that of power and control, but of a different kind.

5. Plato's Divine Helmsmen

The helmsman model is often used for the gods in Plato, appearing in the *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Politicus* and *Symposium* (see appendix 1). There are two principal ways that the model is used: first when the verbs for steering (κυβερνάω, διακυβερνάω) signify government and second when the whole concept of helmsman and ship is developed.

The verb 'to steer' is used for reason's control of the universe at *Philebus* 28d (διακυβερνᾶν), of the gods' control over mankind at *Timaeus* 42e and again of the

¹⁹² See Gill, p. 156 in 'Plato and politics: the *Critias* and the *Politicus*'.

¹⁹³ On the failure of the shepherd image to provide an acceptable *paradeigma* for governing in the *Polit.*, see Lane pp. 43-6. Her conclusion is that in this dialogue shepherding is shown to be 'neither a technically nor politically appropriate example' for statesmanship (p. 46). On the same point see Gill, p. 154.

gods' influence in human affairs at *Laws* 709c. On these occasions διακυβερνάω would seem to be a simple metaphor or analogy for government; indeed in the *Philebus* passage it appears with the verb ἐπιτροπέω (to be in charge, to be guardian, trustee) and in the *Timaeus* with the verb ἀρχεῖν (to rule). The image of steering for divine government is well established in pre-Platonic writings, as shown above. Plato, however, does not merely adopt the model but develops it in different ways for his own purposes: in the *Politicus* God the helmsman steers the ship of the universe through various storms; in the *Critias* the metaphor presents the gods controlling and directing men as if they were ships and in the *Laws* the image is given a new twist when the idea of a drunken crew is used to support the argument that the gods cannot be bribed. These three passages will be considered in detail in Chapter 4 but for the moment it is the general significance of the metaphor that is of interest.

The helmsman model offers an image of technical skill and guiding power and thus conveys very well the idea of a rational, controlling principle in the universe.¹⁹⁴ But further, the portrayal of the universe and human beings as ships steered by the gods suggests that they have no autonomy. What happens to a ship is beyond its control; it exists as an instrument ready to be manipulated by the will of another. Further, as an inanimate object a ship can experience no independent development.

V. Interconnecting Images

Now that the five main models for the gods' relationship with the universe and human beings have been set out, it can be shown how Plato uses his different models and metaphors in conjunction with one another as a means to overcome the deficiencies of each. Plato presents the gods as craftsmen, fathers, governors, masters and helmsmen, entailing the views of the universe and humankind as artefacts, children, subjects, slaves and ships. These metaphors overlap in various ways and together convey Plato's conception of a benevolent, creative and controlling power. Although there is much in common between the five models, since God appears throughout as a human male involved in an act of creation and/or the exercise of control, still important differences remain. Lloyd has observed both that the images 'interconnect' and that they offer different pictures of God (*PA*, pp. 284-5):

But each of the descriptions which recur in the *Timaeus*, *Politicus*, *Philebus* and *Laws* — the king, the Father, the Pilot, the Maker-Creator-Craftsman, the world-living animal — serves, in a different way to express an idea of the role of an intelligent, beneficent cause in the universe . . . each of these descriptions evidently has its own part to play in conveying a slightly different picture of the role of the primary cause and of its relation to other, subsidiary causes . . . As King, he exercises a benevolent control over all things. As Pilot, he is the intelligent directing agent in the world. As Father, he is a benevolent creator. As the

¹⁹⁴ See Lloyd, *PA*, p. 272.

Good Craftsman he is a skilful and purposeful creator who achieves the best results that the nature of the material will allow. [. . .] It is, then, by this remarkable series of interconnected and overlapping images that Plato conveys his conception of the primary cause which is at work in the universe.

I accept Lloyd's analysis but want to go deeper into the issue to argue that Plato deliberately uses the different models and metaphors in conjunction with one another in individual passages in order to make up for the deficiencies of each. For while it is true that each image adds something to the representation of God, nevertheless it is also true that each fails on its own to offer a fully satisfying analogy. Despite a certain consistency in that the gods are portrayed throughout as human males who create or control, still there are significant differences between the metaphors — a situation which leads to a number of conflicting ideas.

The craftsman model conveys very well the notions of design, skill and the purposeful creation of harmony and order but has a certain disanalogy with Plato's general conception of the gods and their relationship to the universe. For in other passages in the corpus (e.g. *Laws* 729e, 871c, 907a and 927b) the gods are presented as concerned with and as ruling over human affairs — activities which the craftsman metaphor cannot explain. For although the craftsman image offers a vivid picture of God controlling his material as he fashions the universe, it cannot account for any subsequent control in the post-creative phase: once a table is manufactured, it is taken away by the new owner and the craftsman no longer decides its fate. Further, the craftsman is (normally) working in a marketplace, exchanging his labour and skill for pay and employing his art to create objects to perform particular functions and to satisfy customer demand. It is difficult to apply these aspects of the craftsman's work to the Demiurge. Similarly, although the craftsman can perhaps be said to care for his handiwork as he labours over it, it is rather awkward to imagine him being concerned about the welfare of all the objects he has created in the past. In short, there is a necessary emotional and practical distance between a craftsman and his work which does not reflect Plato's view of a force presiding over and concerned about human affairs.

The father model provides a pleasing synthesis of the ideas of creation, care and control but carries no associations of skill or design. Unlike craftsmanship, fatherhood is not a τέχνη. A craftsman can set his mind to creating an excellent piece of work but a father cannot improve the nature of his child by concentrating his will at the time of creation. Therefore while the craftsman model provides a very good image of the element of design in creation, this is not the case with the father model. A further deficiency of the father model is that while the craftsman metaphor provides a plausible model for the single creative force, the production of a child invariably requires both a father and a mother. The suppression of the female role might not have disturbed the Athenians, familiar as they were with the story of the birth of Athene and the myth of

autochthony,¹⁹⁵ but logically there is a difficulty here that Plato does not address. The craftsman and father models offer very different versions of creation, since the former suggests that the universe is a completed piece of work while the latter presents a child-universe which will grow and develop in various ways. While the image of the universe as a living, rational being, is fertile with attractive suggestions for Plato, nevertheless there are important deficiencies in this image for God's creation: namely, the difficulty of single-parent generation and the absence of τέχνη in procreation.

While the model of God as father is like those of ruler, master and helmsmen, in that all offer images of power and control, still there are differences which result in views of the divine/human relationship that are difficult to reconcile. For instance, whereas a father exercises control in the interests of his child's development, and while a ruler may exercise power in the interests of the state and its citizens, a master's control is an utterly selfish matter directed towards his own needs and his own benefit, and a helmsman's control is certainly not exercised for the good of the ship. For although the helmsman in the course of his duty seeks to preserve the good condition and safety of his ship, he is not benevolent towards it in any other respect. The helmsman model offers a striking image of power and control but it is a non-creative image whose primary associations are not those of benevolent care. The portrayal of the universe and human beings as ships steered by the gods offers a view of divine control which is similar in some ways to the master/slave model. For the inanimate ship, like the slave deprived of rights, has no autonomy. Further, while both the helmsman and master exercise power, neither has a close or caring relationship with what they control. Thus the models of the helmsman/ship and of the master/slave offer a very different view of the relationship between God and the universe from that of the father/child or ruler/subject models, where those in authority also protect and nurture those they control. Although the helmsman and master models are alike in this respect, clearly they differ in that the helmsman controls an inanimate object while the master, like the father and ruler control human subjects. Thus in the latter three models, unlike that of the helmsman, the universe and humankind have both life and will of their own and can experience separate development. The helmsman model, then, in that it represents the universe as inanimate, is similar to the craftsman model, whereby man and the universe exist as artefacts. The difference, however, is that in the craftsman model, the universe is the product of God's work and its very nature tells us something of the skill and design of the creator. Finally, the models of rulers, masters and helmsmen cannot account for God's creation of the universe.

Although the use of various images for the gods can lead to difficulties of the sorts mentioned, Plato cannot rely on any single model, since each on its own fails to offer a fully satisfying analogy. Thus he is compelled to use a number of different metaphors, and the variation has a cognitive rather than stylistic purpose: it is only by using the metaphors in conjunction with one another that Plato can fully express his vision. A

¹⁹⁵ See S. Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy*, pp. 67-8.

brief illustration can be given in Plato's frequent use of craftsman and father models in close conjunction. At *Sophist* 266b4 craft and child metaphors are active together as the Stranger speaks of living creatures and natural elements as the 'offspring' of 'divine workmanship' (γεννήματα . . . ἀπειργασμένα) and at *Politicus* 273b1-2 the supreme God is referred to as demiurge and father (τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρός). The same device occurs in the *Timaeus*: first at 28c God is both πατήρ and ποιητής; at 41d2 the lesser gods are instructed to 'produce and beget mortals' (ἀπεργάζεσθε ζῷα καὶ γεννᾶτε) and at 42e7-8 God is both the father of the lesser gods and the craftsman responsible for them (πατρός, δημιουργόν).¹⁹⁶ By using these two images which in some respects clash with each other and in others correspond, Plato achieves two things: first he is able to direct the reader's attention to common aspects (namely, creation and responsibility) but second he can use the two clashing images to overcome the deficiencies of each; with the craftsman image providing the notions of skill and design and the father image providing the notions of continuing care, of authority and of an intimate personal relationship. Thus the device of using mixed metaphors is designed to overcome the limitations of each metaphor when used on its own. This Platonic technique will be examined further in Chapter 4.

VI. Emotive, Illustrative or Epistemic?

Returning to the earlier discussions of Chapter 1 it now remains to consider whether Plato's metaphors for the gods play an emotive, illustrative or epistemic role and to try to establish how far, or in what sense, these models and metaphors are indispensable to his discourse on the gods.

First, although some of the models are in themselves very emotive (e.g. God as father) and although they can all be used emotively to promote particular arguments, nevertheless the emotive view cannot account for all the functions of these metaphors. For they also work to convey the information that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good. The question of whether the models and metaphors play an illustrative or epistemic role is more difficult to decide.

According to the illustrative thesis, metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things but do not provide new knowledge or information over and above that which can be expressed in literal terms. In contrast, the epistemic thesis maintains that some metaphors have a distinct and irreducible cognitive force which provides a special kind of epistemic access not provided by literal language. In order to decide which of these best accounts for the role of Plato's metaphors for the gods, an answer is required on whether the insights the metaphors provide into the notion of a supreme God can also be conveyed by literal terms.

¹⁹⁶ See also *Polit.* 269d and 273b.

As has been shown in Chapter 2, there is a strain of thought in the dialogues that maintains that knowledge of the divine nature is beyond human grasp. Given this view, what role could Plato expect his divine metaphors to play? Lloyd suggests that Plato saw images as having a special power (*PA*, p. 300):

on such subjects as the nature of the Maker and Father of the universe and the nature of the movement of Reason, Plato explicitly disclaimed being able to give a non-figurative account (*Ti.* 28c, *Laws* 897de) and it is clear that he believed images are necessary for the expression of some of the highest truths.

While the passages cited do indeed say that it is impossible to give a full and precise demonstration of these subjects, nevertheless on these occasions Plato does not claim that he is somehow conveying a truth which cannot be expressed in literal terms. For he simply switches from telling what something *is* to what it *is like* and ignores the problem of how one can know what *x* is like without knowing what *x* is in the first place.¹⁹⁷ Further, in the case of the divine nature the 'highest truths' are expressions of what Plato believes to be true.¹⁹⁸ Thus Lloyd's assessment that Plato believed that images are necessary for the expression of some of the 'highest truths' is misleading, for Plato never makes this claim and rather seems reconciled to the fact that his language about the gods can only express his beliefs about them. Thus Plato does not use the craftsman metaphor in order to express a higher truth through its special, figurative meaning but rather in order simply to convey his belief that God has a creative power which in some respects is like that of a craftsman. Whether this is true or not remains entirely a matter of belief, and Plato never suggests that images or metaphors can go beyond what can be said in literal terms.

In all of these metaphors the gods are presented as human males. The divine nature is defined in terms of human powers and activities and the presentation of God as a male figure reflects the prevalent attitude of the ancient world that the male is somehow superior to the female. Plato inherited this anthropomorphic view of the gods and, as Lloyd observes (p. 285), these images are 'largely traditional or at least pre-Platonic'. These metaphors do not offer striking new insights into the divine nature, since, essentially, they present the view, already familiar to the Greeks, that the gods create and control the universe. The metaphors are often vivid and memorable, giving life and depth to Plato's vision of the gods, but the key issue at present is whether the information provided by them can be expressed in literal terms.

The answer to this question depends on one's view of the nature of literal language. Some would argue that the descriptions of God as 'helmsman' or 'father' *etc.* are so well established that they are not metaphorical at all. On this view the descriptions are 'dead' metaphors and so are to be classed as literal phrases. If that is so, then the question remaining is one of the relationship between different literal statements

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 2 (2. IV.2 and 2.V).

¹⁹⁸ See Chapter 2 (2.IV).

for the gods. However, if one accepts that the albeit traditional phrases retain their prominence and deviation, then they can still be classed as metaphorical. Further, even if they are technically 'dead' at this stage of linguistic and literary development, a skilful author could still re-animate them by extending them and by elaborating particular details. Thus even if one maintains that Plato's presentations of God as a craftsman or helmsman are instances of dead metaphor, one cannot dispute that he is able to reanimate them by developing them and so giving rise to novel formulations. This process of reanimation can be seen, for example, when the gods are said to 'weld' bits of the universe together (*Timaeus*) or when the supreme God leaves go of his rudder and retires to a look-out point (*Politicus*).

So are these various Platonic models of God illustrative or epistemic? Again the matter rests on one's views on literal language. For if one believes that the cognitive content of Plato's metaphors for the gods can be reduced to the three propositions mentioned above — that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good — and if one accepts that these are literal statements, then one must hold that the models are performing an illustrative role. For while they are presenting information in a particularly striking fashion, nevertheless it is information that can also be expressed in literal terms. However, if (like A.J. Ayer or Bernard Williams) one holds that all language is not only derived from but also bounded by our human experience of the world, then the application of the human notions of creation and control to the divine or cosmic level is itself metaphorical. Thus, to say that the gods create the universe is to portray them as undertaking an activity which can only be understood in human terms. The matter then becomes a question of the relationship between different metaphors, as the images of God the craftsman and God the father become second-level metaphors presenting a particular version of the first-level metaphor of god's 'creation'. On this analysis Plato's models and metaphors for gods cannot be reduced to literal terms and so play an epistemic role in conveying ideas which cannot be expressed without the use of (live) metaphors or at least traditional imagery. So the issue of 'illustrative *versus* epistemic' comes to rest on one's attitude towards the nature of language about God.

My own view is that the statement 'God creates and controls the universe' can be regarded as a literal statement of belief and therefore that the various models and metaphors play an illustrative role in presenting this idea in various ways. As far as indispensability is concerned, for those who accept the epistemic view, the divine metaphors are indeed indispensable to Plato since they provide the only way of speaking about the gods. But for those who consider these metaphors illustrative, the matter is not so straightforward. For on the one hand, the information provided by the metaphors can be stated in literal terms, but on the other hand, those literal statements are very limited in their scope. It may be a literal statement to say that one believes that God creates the world, but if one is pushed further and asked 'but how or why?', it becomes very difficult to give any kind of answer without resorting to metaphors of one kind or another. Thus as Plato seeks to present a more detailed picture of the proc-

esses of creation in the *Timaeus*, he relies very heavily on craft metaphors. Thus, even if one maintains the illustrative view of divine metaphors, one must still admit that metaphors are indispensable to any extended or detailed discourse on the gods.

This chapter has considered the role of Plato's divine metaphors divorced from their contexts and this in some ways gives a distorted view. Chapter 4, in contrast, will examine how some of these metaphors work in their dialogues, and it will become clear that Plato uses metaphors not so much to gain or convey insight into the divine nature but to present more effectively various ideas and beliefs he already holds and has already stated about the gods.

4. Metaphors Working Together

I. Introduction

Plato's various groups of metaphors for the gods have their own possibilities and limitations. Every metaphor has the potential to be explored and extended in different ways and, equally, every metaphor has a point at which it must break down. As Socrates comments in the *Cratylus* (423b), an image cannot match reality in every respect, for then it would no longer be an image. In this chapter I shall show how Plato maximises the potential development of his metaphors and avoids their breakdown points by using the metaphors in conjunction with one another. The metaphors for the gods work together to build up a picture of divine activity. By interweaving his different metaphors Plato is able to achieve cognitive and rhetorical effects which he could not achieve by each metaphor alone.

Lloyd has rightly stressed that Plato's different images for the gods should be accepted as complementary and not alternative accounts (*PA*, p. 301):

In each case a modern interpreter, honouring above all else the principle of consistency, might feel tempted to select one image (or group of images) as the philosopher's true and definitive conception, although such an attempt would surely be misguided. Rather, in each case, to understand the original thought in all its complexity, we should treat these images . . . not as alternative, but as cumulative and complementary accounts, each adding to, but none, as it were, restricting, the writer's conception.

De Marignac has also considered how an image might restrict a writer and suggests that Plato often refrains from developing all the possibilities of a particular image (p. 67):

il ne faut jamais oublier que Platon ne veut pas être le prisonnier de son image. Il l'abandonne quand cela lui plaît, y revient plus tard librement, au gré de sa fantaisie de poète, voulant indiquer par cette manière de l'utiliser que l'image n'est qu'une image, c'est-à-dire que les termes imagés ne disent pas la réalité intelligible telle qu'elle est véritablement dans son essence.¹⁹⁹

A little later (p. 68) de Marignac suggests that Plato's reluctance to develop an image too far may simply be a matter of taste or may be a didactic concern to prevent the situation where a metaphor, too richly developed, becomes a substitute for that which it illustrates. As an example of this substitution de Marignac cites the Christian use of the metaphor 'God the Father', which, he argues, many are simply unable to recognise

¹⁹⁹ 'One must never forget that Plato has no wish to be the prisoner of his image. He will abandon it when it suits him, return freely to it later, at the direction of his poetic imagination, wishing to suggest by this manner of dealing with it that the image is only an image, which means that metaphorical expressions do not articulate intelligible reality as indeed it truly is in its essence.'

as a metaphor at all. He thus concludes: 'Le tact littéraire de Platon est donc en même temps une précaution philosophique'.²⁰⁰ On this view Plato, through his method of freely abandoning and resuming metaphors and by developing them only to a limited extent, is careful to avoid the confusion of image and reality.

The observations of Lloyd and de Marignac on Plato's use of multiple metaphors are useful but tell only half of the story. For as well as forming 'cumulative and complementary' accounts of the gods in general, the metaphors also work with one another on a much smaller scale, in individual dialogues and passages. Once he has established a multiplicity of images for the gods, Plato can move freely between them, using one particular metaphor to achieve a certain effect and then switching easily to another to make a further point in his argument. For example, while the metaphor of God the father can convey certain aspects of authority, when a stronger image of control is required, Plato can introduce the helmsman metaphor, relying on the traditional acceptance of all these images and being careful not to let any of them become too dominant. Thus while de Marignac rightly observes that the limited development of images is a feature of Plato's 'philosophical precaution', it should also be noted that this device affords Plato a certain ease of movement between his metaphors which he can exploit for rhetorical ends. Similarly, to Lloyd's point that all the images add to, but none restrict, the philosopher's *conception*, it must be added that the same is true at a rhetorical level, since all the images add to, but none restrict, the development of a particular argument. Plato's technique of using multiple metaphors to achieve particular rhetorical effects can be seen in three passages: *Critias* 109b-c; *Politicus* 269c-273e and *Laws* 905d-907b.

II. *Critias* 109b-c

In this brief passage the gods are spoken of as both shepherds and helmsmen. De Marignac rightly observes that this pastoral and nautical imagery expresses the benign care that the gods exercise over man and comments on the combined use of metaphor and simile in the passage (p. 66):

Comme on le voit, dans cette image où le pilote et le gouvernail se substituent au berger et à son fouet, la comparaison et la métaphore s'entrelacent très heureusement.²⁰¹

This is undoubtedly true but when de Marignac subsequently turns to the helmsman image of the *Politicus* myth, he makes the following remarks about the *Critias* passage which cannot be sustained (p. 66):

Si, dans le passage précité, l'image nautique arrive d'une façon un peu inattendue et si, comme cela se produit souvent, elle se substitue à une autre image

²⁰⁰ 'Plato's literary tact, then, is at the same time a philosophic precaution'.

²⁰¹ 'As we see in this image, where the pilot and rudder replace the shepherd and his whip, the simile and the metaphor are very satisfactorily intertwined.'

analogue — procédé qui a, semble-t-il, pour raison d'éviter, par la multiplication des images, que la représentation sensible ne s'impose trop fortement et ne recouvre complètement la notion intelligible — dans le myth du *Politique* (272e et 273d), cette métaphore est seule utilisée pour dire l'action de Dieu sur l'univers sensible.²⁰²

First, the helmsman metaphor in the *Critias* passage does not simply replace an 'analogous image', since the two images of shepherds and helmsmen differ in important respects. Second, the main reason for Plato's use of the two images is not so much to prevent either picture becoming too dominant but simply to make the required point, for each image alone cannot express all the ideas he wishes to convey.

Near the beginning of his story of the ancient conflict between Athens and Atlantis Critias tells how in this era the gods divided the earth and how they ruled their allotted regions with no conflict (109b1-5). He is establishing a golden age picture and continues on the gods (109b5-7):

δίκη δὴ κλήροις τὸ φίλον λαγχάνοντες κατώκιζον τὰς χώρας, καὶ κατοικίσαντες, οἷον νομῆς ποίμνια, κτήματα καὶ θρέμματα ἑαυτῶν ἡμᾶς ἔτρεφον.

They apportioned to each his own by righteous allotment, settled their territories, and, when they had settled them, fell to feeding us, their bestial [possessions] and flocks there, as herdsmen do their cattle (tr. Taylor).²⁰³

So the gods, after settling their territories, concerned themselves with tending and feeding man, just as a shepherd tends his flocks (οἷον νομῆς ποίμνια). Thus the simile οἷον νομῆς introduces the idea of the gods as shepherds, an idea which develops out of the presentation of them as the governors of man. The development here can be compared with *Politicus* 271d-276d where the same images are used for the benign care of the gods and for the dependence of men.²⁰⁴ In the *Politicus* the gods are introduced as governors (ἀρχόντων, 271d5), who rule over the portions of the earth, and then are likened, by means of a simile, to shepherds tending their flocks (οἷον νομῆς . . . , 271d6). In the *Politicus* men are among the living creatures tended by the gods (271d-72a) and similarly in the *Critias* passage men are referred to as the κτήματα (possessions) and θρέμματα (nursling creatures) of the gods. Also, as in the *Politicus*,

²⁰² 'If in the passage already referred to the nautical image comes up rather unexpectedly, and even if, as often happens, it replaces another analogous image — a device which has, it seems, the purpose of ensuring that, by means of the multiplying of images, the picture conveyed does not impose itself too forcibly and does not wholly call up the idea behind it — in the myth of the *Politicus* (272e and 273d), this metaphor is used on its own to express how God acts upon the material world.'

²⁰³ Taylor translates νομῆς as 'herdsman' and ποίμνια as 'cattle' but the words can equally be used of a shepherd and flocks of sheep.

²⁰⁴ See Ch. 3 (3.III.4 and 3.IV.4) on the image of shepherding.

where the gods in one era of the myth 'feed and pasture' men (νομεύουσι, 271e), so in the *Critias* the gods are said to have 'fed and nurtured' them (ἐτρεφον, 109b7).²⁰⁵

After telling how the gods in this era cared for mankind, Critias goes on to relate how they controlled their subjects. The established shepherd metaphor offers one model of control but this is expressly rejected (109b7-8):

πλὴν οὐ σώμασι σώματα βιαζόμενοι, καθάπερ ποιμένες κτήνη πλὴγῇ νέμοντες.

Only they would not coerce body with body in the fashion of shepherds who drive their flocks to pasture with blows; (tr. Taylor).

Thus Critias dismisses the idea that the gods' control over man is like that of shepherds driving their sheep. Although he does not give his reasons for rejecting the image, they seem clear enough. For the image presents the gods resorting to brute force against reluctant charges, who resist their commands, a picture which is unacceptable on two counts: first, the image strikes a discordant note in the golden age scenario, presenting as it does an unflattering picture of both gods and men, and second, the task of controlling men, especially in a golden age, would have been viewed by the Greeks as a far easier one than that of a shepherd physically exerting his will against recalcitrant sheep.²⁰⁶ This point is borne out as Critias' next image presents the gods' task of controlling man as a much less troublesome business. It is here that Critias introduces the helmsman metaphor (109c2-4):

ἀλλ' ἢ μάλιστα εὖστροφον ζῶον, ἐκ πρύμνης ἀπευθύνοντες, οἷον οἶακι πειθοῖ ψυχῆς ἐφαπτόμενοι κατὰ τὴν αὐτῶν διάνοιαν, οὕτως ἄγοντες τὸ θνητὸν πᾶν ἐκυβέρνων.

but they set the course of the living creature from that part by which it is most easily turned, its stern, controlling its soul after their own mind by persuasion as by a rudder and so moving and steering every mortal creature (tr. Taylor, adapted).

In terms of the helmsman metaphor the gods guide (ἀπευθύνω) the human creature by its stern (πρύμνη) — which Taylor mistranslates as 'prow', the Greek for which is πῶρα — and the living creature becomes a ship sailing on a particular course. The

²⁰⁵ Gill ('Plato and politics') compares Plato's use of the shepherd image in the *Polit.* and *Crit.* and argues that in the latter, 'the treatment is more complex' (p. 156). He also discusses the relationship between these passages and *Laws* 713c-714a, where Plato again uses the myth of Kronos, the idea of *daimones* governing humans, and the comparison of the rule of these gods with human management of animals (pp. 158-163). Gill demonstrates that a progression can be seen between *Polit.*, *Crit.* and *Laws*, as Plato takes more seriously the 'motif of divine herdsmanhood', and he draws the general conclusion (p. 160): 'Plato repeatedly explores the idea that the gods provide an ordered and significant framework for human political life'.

²⁰⁶ On the idea that the gods were thought to accomplish things easily, see M.L. West's comments on lines 5-7 of Hesiod's *Works and Days*. On the shepherd's role as one of directing an unruly crowd, see Brock, p. 46 (cited in Ch. 3 (3.III.4)).

stern of the ship is the part by which it is 'most easily turned' (εὐστροφός) because that is the place where the rudder is situated. In contrast to the physical blows of the previous image, this ship metaphor suggests ease of movement. The ship metaphor is further developed as Critias tells how the gods direct the human soul by persuasion (πείθοι) which is like a helm (οἶον οἴακι) — an appropriate simile as persuasion is indeed a very effective means of control. The verb κυβερνάω (steer) forms the final part of the image as the gods are said to 'steer everything that is mortal'. The overall effect of this image is that of easy influence as the helmsman guides his ship on its way. Critias' point is that the gods do not have to resort to brute force to impose their will but that they control humans by the more sophisticated method of persuasion. The ship image is more appropriate than that of the shepherd to express this, since the rudder provides a smoother form of control than the whip or stick and since the picture of a ship in sail conveys a striking image of orderly movement in contrast to the wayward steps of a flock of sheep.

The helmsman metaphor, therefore, allows Plato to portray a different picture of movement and control from that of the shepherd simile, and the differences between the two pictures highlight the contrast between brute force and persuasion. Although the picture of the helmsman holding the rudder and steering the vessel is no less physical in itself than that of the shepherd, Plato still establishes a contrast between the two so that the latter conveys the idea of psychological pressure. Clearly there are in-built differences between the vehicles of the two images (shepherd and helmsman) but Plato creates further contrasts by emphasising the physical nature of the first and by introducing psychological terms into the second. The first image provides a vivid picture of physical contact with the force (βία-) and the blows (πληγῇ) administered by the shepherds and the idea of bodily contact, reinforced by the repetition and juxtaposition of σώμασι σώματα. In contrast the second image introduces the ideas of mind and soul (διάνοιαν, ψυχῆς) as well as the central idea of persuasion (πείθοι).²⁰⁷ Thus Plato stresses the physical aspects of the first image and brings non-physical ideas into the second in order to make two equally concrete vehicles seem more different than they actually are.

The change of image in this passage plays a rhetorical role in allowing Plato to avoid a potential problem in the passage concerning the idea of persuasion. In both the shepherd and helmsman images there is an underlying metaphor: that of physical movement for the life and decision-making of human beings. Both images represent control as guidance along a particular route: the sheep move reluctantly forward in the direction in which the shepherd drives them and the helmsman steers the unresisting ship on the chosen course. Thus human life is presented as movement and decisions

²⁰⁷ On Critias' point that the gods rule by persuasion rather than force, Gill ('Plato and politics') comments (p. 157): 'This qualification lays stress on the closeness of men to gods, the greater equality of their relationship, and their common possession of reason which enables this relationship'. On the *bia/peitho* distinction, see Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, pp. 58-63.

become choices about the direction of this movement. But who is making the choices? Unlike the sheep who make life hard for their masters, the ship has no will of its own and so cannot resist the commands of its controller. Thus once the image of control shifts from that of a living creature to that of an inanimate object, the need for persuasion, and indeed the very possibility of it, is removed. Considered in this way, the ship image is completely inappropriate for illustrating how the gods control man by persuasion, which is its very function here. However, the inappropriateness of persuasion in this context is not immediately obvious in the passage, as what is most striking is the contrast between ease of movement achieved through psychological pressure and reluctant progress won through brute force. Therefore by switching metaphors Plato is able to avoid the awkward problem of explaining what would happen if human beings were not won over by the persuasion of the gods.

It should now be clear that the helmsman metaphor in the *Critias* does not replace an *analogous* one and that the primary reason behind the switch of images is not to prevent either one becoming too dominant. For while the shepherd image portrays control (or lack of it) over a living being, the helmsman portrays control over an inanimate object, a difference which allows Plato deftly to avoid a question he does not wish to raise at this point: human free will. In addition, the two images are also disanalogous in that the shepherd simile expresses the idea of benign care of the gods and the dependence and defencelessness of man but offers an inappropriate model of control (physical blows), while the helmsman image successfully conveys the notion of easy influence but cannot convey any sense of care. Thus, in a passage where Plato wants to express both the care and control of the gods, either image used on its own would simply be inadequate or inappropriate for his purposes.²⁰⁸

III. *Politicus* 269c-273e

In the myth of the *Politicus* the image of God the helmsman is drawn with great power and vivid detail. De Marignac finds a contrast between Plato's use of the image in this dialogue and the *Critias*, for while in the *Critias* it is used in conjunction with the shepherd simile, he views it as acting alone in the *Politicus* (p. 66): 'cette métaphore est seule utilisée pour dire l'action de Dieu sur l'univers sensible'.²⁰⁹ However, the metaphor of the helmsman is not used on its own in the *Politicus* myth; it is used in conjunction with others, notably that of God as a father, and the overall effect of the myth is achieved through the interaction between the different images.

²⁰⁸ Compare Leary's comments on Freud's use of metaphor ('Psyche's Muse', p. 18): 'Freud's use of multiple metaphors was occasioned by his awareness of the insufficiency of any single metaphor. He did not seek multiplicity for its own sake. Instead, . . . he constantly strove to find the most appropriate and useful metaphors for his particular concerns and subject matter'.

²⁰⁹ 'This metaphor is used on its own to express how God acts upon the material world'.

In the myth the Stranger tells of ancient legends concerning the era when Kronos was king of the universe, an era which, he says, precedes the present one under the kingship of Zeus (269b, 272b).²¹⁰ In the following discussion my reading of the myth will be based on the understanding that there are two cycles in the universe's development. These cycles have contrasting features. First, in the age of Kronos:

- (1) a supreme God is in control, assisted by lesser divinities;
- (2) God rotates the universe in direction *a* (from our own perspective on time we may call this 'anticlockwise');
- (3) human beings are born from the earth;
- (4) human beings develop in reverse fashion: they are born as grey-haired old men; become younger and younger until they are babies and finally seed; the seed falls back into the earth; the creatures are reformed in the earth (under the agency of divine forces) and are reborn as grey-haired old men. These births and rebirths go on throughout the era;
- (5) the gods look after humans and all animals are tame;

and

- (6) the era lasts thousands of years.

Second (in direct contrast), in the age of Zeus:

- (1) both the supreme God and the lesser divinities have withdrawn and the universe is left to control itself;
- (2) the universe rotates itself in the opposite direction (we may call this 'clockwise');
- (3) human beings are born through procreation;
- (4) human beings develop in the familiar, 'forwards' fashion: they are born as babies, age until they are old people and then die. The old in this period are not reborn;

²¹⁰ There has been much debate recently about the correct interpretation of this myth. The traditional view has been that the story of the myth involves a two-stage cycle in the universe's development. This view, taken by such commentators as Skemp (*Plato, The Statesman*) and Taylor (*Plato: The Sophist and The Statesman*), has been challenged by Luc Brisson (*Le Même et l'autre dans la structure ontologique du Timée de Platon* and 'Interprétation du mythe du Politique') and by Christopher Rowe in his detailed commentary on the dialogue (*Plato: Statesman*). The first challenge to the traditional interpretation was by Lovejoy and Boas (*Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*) who argued that there are three eras set out in the myth. Brisson develops this view in some detail and it is further modified by Rowe. The close analyses of the myth by Brisson and Rowe have shown how careful Plato is in the construction of his story and how certain important themes of the myth are also developed elsewhere in Plato (for example, divine rule *versus* human autonomy and the creation of a rational universe from disorder). Their readings have brought to light many important points in the text but I still believe that the story presents two contrasting cycles. I intend to defend this interpretation in a later article.

(5) humans look after themselves and some animals become wild;

and

(6) the era lasts thousands of years.

On this reading there are two reversals: first as the golden age (Kronos era) comes to an end (at the point where God withdraws) and the era of Zeus begins; and second as the era of Zeus ends (at the point where the universe, having regained self-control after the first reversal, subsequently goes out of control again) and God takes the helm once more, thus ushering in a new golden age. This reading of the myth underpins my analysis of the force of its many images for divine activity.

In this section of the *Politicus* the Stranger relates to the young Socrates the story of a great event in 'cosmic history' (269b) and begins by telling how God sometimes guides the universe (269c4-5): τὸ γὰρ πᾶν τόδε τοτὲ μὲν αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς συμποδηγεῖ πορευόμενον καὶ συγκυκλεῖ ('This universe the god himself sometimes accompanies, guiding it on its way and helping it move in a circle', tr. Rowe).²¹¹ In contrast, there are also times when he relinquishes his control (269c5-7): τοτὲ δὲ ἀνήκεν, ὅταν αἱ περίοδοι τοῦ προσήκοντος αὐτῷ μέτρον εἰλήφωσιν ἤδη χρόνου ('while at other times he lets it go, when its circuits have completed the measure of the time allotted to it'). When God releases his control, the universe undergoes a great change (269c7-d2):

τὸ δὲ πάλιν αὐτόματον εἰς τάναντία περιάγεται, ζῶον δὲ καὶ φρόνησιν εἰληχὸς ἐκ τοῦ συναρμόσαντος αὐτὸ κατ' ἀρχάς.

and of its own accord it revolves backwards, in the opposite direction,²¹² being a living creature and having had intelligence assigned to it by the one who fitted it together in the beginning.

Thus God is presented as the guide of the universe, as the force that imparts rotation to it and as the craftsman who fitted it together.²¹³ The universe, in turn, is a person who

²¹¹ Rowe's translation of the *Polit.* will be used throughout this discussion.

²¹² The use of the terms 'backwards' and 'opposite direction' are relative to the previous direction of movement. They cannot be understood in any objective sense (e.g. to the left, to the right), since there is no fixed point in the story by which to measure this. *Contra* Rowe (on 270b7-8), I see no difficulty in Plato's use of 'reversal' terminology. At 269c-270a the terms πάλιν . . . εἰς τάναντία . . . ἀνάπαλιν . . . ἀνακύκλησιν . . . ἀνάπαλιν refer to the reversal that occurs when God withdraws. This 'reversal' is the change of direction from anticlockwise to clockwise (in my terms). At 270b ff. the terms ἐπὶ τάναντία . . . ἀνελίξει refer to the movement that obtains when God is in control. This 'reversal' is the change of direction from clockwise to anticlockwise. I find no problem with describing both the switch from anticlockwise to clockwise and the switch back again as a 'reversal': they are both reversals — of each other.

²¹³ Rowe (*ad loc.*) observes the similarities between this myth and the cosmological account of *Tim.*: 'The Timaeon elements here are 1. the idea that the universe was created at some point in the past by a divine craftsman; 2. that it is a living creature; 3. that it was endowed by its creator with intelligence; and 4. that that intelligence is expressed in its circular movement (*Tim.* 28b-c, 30a-c, 34a).' On Plato's use of circular movement to signal intelligence and rationality (and, conversely, linear movement to signal irrationality), see my 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

travels a particular journey (objects do not have guides), an object that revolves and is fashioned by a craftsman, and a living, rational being. Thus even at the start of the myth Plato uses different images for the relationship between God and the universe; and indeed the images even conflict, since the universe is presented as both an inanimate object and as a rational creature.²¹⁴ In the subsequent passages of the myth Plato sustains this dual presentation of the universe as both animate and inanimate and the different conceptions are developed in various ways.

At 269d7-9 the relationship between God and the universe is presented as that of father and child:

ὄν δὲ οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον ἐπωνομάκαμεν, πολλῶν μὲν καὶ μακαρίων παρὰ τοῦ γεννήσαντος μετείληφεν.

Now the thing to which we have given the name of 'heavens' and 'world-order' certainly has a portion of many blessed things from its progenitor.

This view of God entails the idea of the universe as a living being, a representation that is continued at 270a3-4 where the universe is said to acquire 'life' once more and to receive 'a restored immortality' (τὸ ζῆν πάλιν ἐπικτώμενον καὶ λαμβάνοντα ἀθανασίαν ἐπισκευαστήν).²¹⁵ However, in the same sentence (at 270a5) the universe has to be regarded as inanimate, since God the creator is referred to as a craftsman: παρὰ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ. Besides metaphors for God as the creator of the universe, in the early parts of the myth there are also metaphors for his role as controlling power. At 269e5-6 God is spoken of as 'guide' or 'leader': τῷ τῶν κινουμένων αὐτῶν πάντων ἡγουμένῳ (the one who guides all the things which, unlike him, are in movement). The verb ἡγέομαι means both 'to guide' and 'to command' and thus serves as a bridge term between the idea of God guiding the universe on its way (269c4, 270a3) and the later idea of God as a supreme governor of the universe (ἦρχεν . . . ὁ θεός, 271d3).²¹⁶ Even at this early stage of the myth, then, before the helmsman metaphor is introduced, both God and the universe are presented in a number of ways. Most importantly, the universe is presented as both animate and inanimate, a dual presentation which will be developed as Plato shows how the universe is dependent upon God.

After the Stranger has recounted how without God's control the universe begins to revolve in the opposite direction, he describes how this reversal affected human beings (270 c ff.). Socrates accepts his account and asks what human life was like in the pre-

²¹⁴ Perhaps the background of myth helps to reduce the tension somewhat, as earlier Greek myths also present the gods as fashioning living creatures. See e.g. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 59-82.

²¹⁵ Rowe's note (*ad loc.*) is very helpful on this notion of *restored immortality* and he rightly observes the connection between this passage and 273c3. His comparison of the ideas in these passages with *Tim.* 41a-b is illuminating.

²¹⁶ I support Rowe's conclusion on 271d3-4: "Ruling and taking care of the rotation as a whole" seems initially to be a rather stronger idea than the "guiding [the universe] on its way and helping it move in a circle" of 269c5 (cf. 270a2), but in fact seems to be describing the same thing'.

vious period. This previous era is designated as the reign of Kronos (271c), in contrast to the present era, which is referred to as the time of Zeus((272b). The Stranger replies that in the reign of Kronos God was supreme governor of the universe (271d3), how he alone was responsible for its rotation, and how the different regions of the universe were apportioned out to be provinces under the government of other, lesser gods (271d). He then presents a picture of a golden age where these gods tended to the needs of human beings and where they maintained order in the universe as a whole. In this era none of the animals was savage (271e1-2). However, the Stranger also tells that there was a destined end for this era, an end which resulted in universal change (272d). It is at this point in the story, when the first era comes to an end, that the helmsman metaphor is introduced (272e3-5):

τότε δὴ τοῦ παντὸς ὁ μὲν κυβερνήτης, οἷον πηδαλίων οἶακος ἀφήμενος, εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ περιωπὴν ἀπέστη.

at that point the steersman of the universe, after letting go, as it were, of the bar of the steering-oars, retired to his observation post.

Thus in the first era, when human beings are under the care of the gods, the supreme governor god is not only to be seen as rotating and guiding the universe (269c), but also as acting as its helmsman, steering it on its way. Thus the end of this period, when he relinquishes control, is presented in terms of his letting go of the rudder. Now the helmsman is said to retire to his 'observation post'. De Marignac (pp. 66-7) considers whether, in metaphorical terms, this means that he leaves the 'ship' itself. Commenting on περιωπή, he observes (p.66): 'Cette dernière expression n'est pas, à proprement parler, maritime'.²¹⁷ However, he points out that as a result of 'metaphoric suggestion' the reader can picture this observation post as on the ship itself. But de Marignac also argues that the general content of the myth leads the reader to think of God as distanced from and outside of the universe, 'comme si le pilote avait quitté le navire'.²¹⁸ Which is the correct interpretation? Is the observation post to be understood as on the ship or not? Brisson argues that it is on the ship ('Interprétation du mythe du *Politique*', p. 357, n.28). However, four points would seem to indicate that this is not the case:

- (1) if a ship has an observation post, it is so that the crew can look out beyond the ship, not so that they can watch the progress of the ship itself (as God does in this myth);
- (2) there is no reason why God should remain on board, as it is perfectly conceivable that he keep watch over the ship from elsewhere — from land, if conceived in human terms, or from any point whatsoever in divine terms;

²¹⁷ 'this last expression is not strictly speaking to do with the sea'.

²¹⁸ 'as though the helmsman had left the ship'.

(3) as the myth continues and chaos begins to assert its sway over the ship of the universe it is inappropriate for God to be still onboard somewhere, getting buffeted about like everything else;

and

(4) since at 273d God is said to look down on the ship in its troubles, it becomes difficult to imagine that he is at that time on an observation point on board, looking down on the rest of the storm-tossed ship but feeling none of the effects himself.

For all these reasons, in addition to de Marignac's own points that *περιωπή* is not a nautical term and that the myth as a whole presents God as outside the universe and separate from it, it seems that the observation post is to be understood as outside the ship.

The act of letting go of the rudder represents God's relinquishing of control over the universe and thus it has profound effects. As the universe is now left to control itself, its own impulse causes the direction of its rotation to be reversed (τὸν δὲ δὴ κόσμον πάλιν ἀνέστρεφεν εἰμαρμένη τε καὶ σύμφυτος ἐπιθυμία, 273a). At this point a shudder is said to pass through the world and the shock of the reversal causes a 'great tremor', which leads to the destruction of creatures of all kinds. However, this chaos turns out to be only a temporary phase and in time, as the universe adjusts to the new direction of the rotation, order is regained. Now the image of the universe as a ship is replaced by that of a living being, as the Stranger explains (273a4-9):

μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα προελθόντος ἱκανοῦ χρόνου, θορύβων τε καὶ ταραχῆς ἤδη παύομενος καὶ τῶν σεισμῶν γαλήνης ἐπιλαβόμενος εἰς τε τὸν εἰωθότα δρόμον τὸν ἑαυτοῦ κατακοσμούμενος ἦει, ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ κράτος ἔχων αὐτὸς τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τε καὶ ἑαυτοῦ, τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρὸς ἀπομνημονεύων διδαχὴν εἰς δύναμιν.

After this, when sufficient time had elapsed, it began to cease from noise and confusion and attained calm from its tremors, and set itself in order, into the accustomed course that belongs to it,²¹⁹ itself taking charge of and mastering both

²¹⁹ Rowe comments (*ad loc.*): ' "The accustomed course which belongs to it" is one which results from the universe's "mastering . . . itself" . . . and this can surely only mean the mastery of reason (269d1) over the bodily element (269d5-e1).' I agree with this point but do not agree with Rowe on what exactly is meant by 'accustomed course'. On 269e3-4 Rowe maintains that the universe's rotation in the direction which God revolved it 'will in fact later be identified as "the accustomed course which belongs to it"'. In the terms I have used God rotates the universe anticlockwise, whereas on Rowe's reading God rotates the universe clockwise. But the discrepancy on the *direction* of the rotation is not relevant for understanding the point of 'accustomed course', which relates rather to the *nature* of its movement. When God rotates the universe, its movement can be seen as steady and on a single axis. When God withdraws, upheaval follows. The direction of the rotation changes, but also the universe now has to try to control its own 'bodily element'. It finds it difficult at first and its difficulties can be compared to the disruption of the circles of the soul that attend the soul's entry into a body at *Tim.* 43b-44b. At this stage linear movement enters

the things within it and itself, because it remembered so far as it could the teaching of its craftsman and father.

The first part of this passage is neutral enough to allow one to continue to visualise the universe as a ship: *θορύβων* and *ταραχῆς* could refer to the disturbance on board a ship caused by a storm; 'shaking' (*τῶν σεισμῶν*) is fitting in this picture and *γαλήνη* literally means 'the calm of the sea'. However, when the universe is said to have *ἐπιμέλειαν καὶ κράτος* (care/control and power/rule) over itself, it can no longer be imagined as a ship. The notion of government returns and now instead of God being supreme governor, assisted by a host of lesser deities in the 'provinces', the universe governs itself. So the image of the universe becomes more anthropomorphic, a process completed when the universe is described as 'remembering so far as it could the teaching of its craftsman and father' (*τὴν τοῦ δημιουργοῦ καὶ πατρός ἀπομνημονεύων διδασχὴν εἰς δύναμιν*).²²⁰ The reference to God as 'craftsman and father' of the universe again raises the tension between the universe as an inanimate object and a living being, since the reader is invited to picture the universe as both the handiwork of God and his child. In the final words of the sentence, as the universe is said to 'remember' the instruction of its father, it is portrayed as a living, rational being and thus by the end of this section the dominant image of the universe is as a living creature. Why does Plato switch from the image of the ship to that of a rational, living creature?

The answer is to be found in Plato's overall message in this passage. After the universe suffers the upheaval of God's withdrawal, order is — in time — re-established, as the universe gains control over its bodily element and achieves again steady motion on a single axis. The removal of an external force leads — in time — to the development of an internal government. Thus Plato requires an image to convey the idea of order and chaos reasserting themselves from within. Essentially the myth tells what happens when God controls the universe and what happens when he relinquishes that control. Both the helmsman and father metaphors offer equally effective images of power and control and both offer striking versions of the effect of God's withdrawal: the ship cannot steer itself and so sails off-course into a storm and the child left to fend for itself becomes disorderly. So far, both images suit Plato's purpose but when he wants to present the universe regaining order and control of itself after an initial stage of disturbance, the ship image is no longer appropriate or effective. For once a ship runs adrift, it cannot steer itself back on course. In contrast, the model of father and child can provide a very satisfying, and indeed moving, image of the devel-

the picture, as, like a spinning top losing its momentum, the universe tips from side to side as a result of the shock of its change of direction. But in time the universe establishes control over itself and so is able to run steadily and evenly without tipping up and down, i.e. on a single axis again. In this way the universe achieves the same sort of rotation on a single axis as it enjoyed under God's control. Thus I take 'accustomed course' to refer to steady, circular movement on a single axis. I have explored the relationship between circular and linear movement in the dialogues in 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

²²⁰ The notions of fatherhood and teaching are traditionally linked, see e.g. *Odyssey* 24 338-9.

opment of self-control. Deprived of its father's control, the child-universe becomes disorderly and confused, but as time passes the child learns to care for and control itself properly by remembering its father's teaching. If the content of this teaching is understood as the ways of order and regularity, principles which were established when God first created the universe by bringing order from chaos (273d4), then it is perfectly appropriate that it should be this instruction that the universe remembers when it sets itself in order again after the cosmic crisis. A good parent teaches a child the things it will need to know in later life as it develops and becomes independent. Thus in Plato's image it is the knowledge of order and regularity — expressed in the idea of revolution on a single axis — taught by its father, that the universe recalls as it strives to manage on its own. Indeed, as the myth progresses, it is this memory of the father's instruction that alone secures order for the universe, as is shown at 273b and 273c-d.

At 273b2-3 the Stranger describes the universe's fading memory of its father's teaching: κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν οὖν ἀκριβέστερον ἀπετέλει, τελευτῶν δὲ ἀμβλύτερον ('At the beginning it fulfilled it more accurately, but in the end more dimly') and at 273c4-d1 he tells of its descent into chaos after prolonged separation from God:

χωριζόμενος δὲ ἐκείνου τὸν ἐγγύτατα χρόνον αἰὲ τῆς ἀφέσεως κάλλιστα πάντα διάγει, προϊόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ λήθης ἐγγιγνομένης ἐν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον καὶ δυναστεύει τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος, τελευτῶντος δὲ ἐξανθεῖ τοῦ χρόνου.

but in separation from him, during all the time closest to the moment of letting go, it manages everything very well, but as time moves on and forgetfulness increases in it, the condition of its original disharmony also takes greater control of it, and, as this time ends, comes to full flower.²²¹

Thus the reassertion of chaos is directly linked with the universe's 'forgetfulness' (λήθη) of its father's instruction; the universe achieves order for itself when it remembers its father's words but collapses into disorder when it forgets them.

This father metaphor at 273a ff. achieves quite different effects from that of the helmsman. For while the idea of helmsman and ship provides a graphic image of control, it is far less effective in conveying the universe's response to that control. In contrast, the father and child metaphor offers an excellent image of adherence to, and then neglect of, a particular type of authority and pattern of direction, and so can account for the reassertion of order and chaos from within the now animate universe.

As the universe forgets God's teaching, chaos reasserts itself (273d). At this point of imminent disaster Plato again switches metaphors so that the universe is once more presented as a ship. The metaphor of God the helmsman, introduced at 272e and mentioned briefly at 273c3 (τοῦ κυβερνήτου), is now developed in some detail and to

²²¹ The grammatical structure and import of this passage will be examined in detail below.

striking effect. As the universe 'hovers on the very brink of destruction' (Skemp's translation of 273d4), God intervenes once more (273d4-e1):

διὸ δὴ καὶ τότε ἤδη θεὸς ὁ κοσμήσας αὐτόν, καθορῶν ἐν ἀπορίαις ὄντα, κηδόμενος ἵνα μὴ χειμασθεῖς ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθεῖς εἰς τὸν τῆς ἀνομοιότητος ἄπειρον ὄντα πόντον δύη, πάλιν ἔφεδρος αὐτοῦ τῶν πηδαλίων γιγνόμενος.

It is for this reason that now the god who ordered it, seeing it in difficulties, and concerned that it should not, storm-tossed as it is, be broken apart in confusion and sink into the boundless sea of unlikeness, takes his position again at its steering-oars.

Thus God looks down on (καθορῶν) the ship of the universe threatened by storms and takes control of the helm once more, to ensure that all will be well. The phrase ἐν ἀπορίαις ('in its troubles') could apply equally to a ship and a person in difficulty, and so the sea image is only established firmly by the participle χειμασθείς ('driven by a storm'). The idea of a storm-tossed ship is then continued in the arresting phrase ὑπὸ ταραχῆς διαλυθείς ('broken up by disorder'), which evokes shipwreck in rough seas, where ταραχῆς acts as a 'pivot' term²²² between the tumult of the storm and the tenor of the metaphor: the disorder which threatens the divine arrangement of the cosmos.²²³ The noun ταραχή (trouble, disorder, confusion, tumult) coheres with the terminology of both the shipwreck and the rational universe's plight, as it is increasingly disordered by the force of its (irrational) bodily element. God's fear that the universe may 'sink' (δύη) into the 'bottomless sea (πόντον) of unlikeness'²²⁴ provides the next stage of the ship image here and the final element comes as God is said to 'take control' once more of the 'rudder' (ἔφεδρος αὐτοῦ τῶν πηδαλίων γιγνόμενος).

In the next part of this sentence the ship image works together with the metaphor of the universe as a living being. The Stranger continues his account of God's intervention (273e2-4):

²²² On 'pivot and glide' as aspects of the inner workings of imagery, see Silk, pp. 87-8. Words that can be identified as glides and pivots 'cohere' with the terminologies of both tenor and vehicle and provide a movement between them. The difference between a pivot and glide is one of 'a more overt or forceful operativeness' (p. 88). In other words, 'The more subdued it is, the greater the temptation to call it a glide'. Since ταραχή is forceful, 'pivot' would seem to be the correct term here.

²²³ The sea itself is often used as a metaphor for confusion and the loss of order. See e.g. N. Austin's comments on the sea as an image of chaos in the *Odyssey* (*Archery at the Dark of the Moon*, pp. 140-2).

²²⁴ The reference to 'unlikeness' (τῆς ἀνομοιότητος) would seem to suggest a situation where disruption and disorder would destroy God's *cosmos*, turning the universe once again into a chaotic mass where no order or harmony could be discerned. This is perhaps an echo of Empedocles' cycle where at a certain point the force of Strife destroys the *cosmos* formed by Love, so that all that was once alike and joined together is forced apart and made unlike again (fr. 17 and 22).

τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα ἐν τῇ καθ' ἑαυτὸν προτέρᾳ περιόδῳ στρέψας, κοσμεῖ τε καὶ ἐπανορθῶν ἀθάνατον αὐτὸν καὶ ἀγήρων ἀπεργάζ-εται.

and having turned round what had become diseased and been broken apart in the previous rotation, when it was left to itself, orders it and by setting it straight renders it immortal and ageless.

Thus, as God steps in to halt the growing chaos, he is spoken of as 'having turned round the parts that were sick and broken up' (τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα . . . στρέψας). The participle λυθέντα (broken up, demolished) is appropriate to a shipwreck, but to understand νοσήσαντα (sick) the universe has to be regarded as a living being. Thus the single phrase τὰ νοσήσαντα καὶ λυθέντα offers a striking mixed metaphor, as the universe is said to have been sick and broken up.²²⁵ As God addresses the chaos, his action is thus to be seen simultaneously as healing what is sick and mending what is broken. However, these actions remain implicit, as Plato chooses to represent the reparation under the single participle στρέψας (having turned round). The phrase 'turning round what is sick and demolished' is unusual, and perhaps even awkward, but it allows Plato to suggest that the suffering is removed and the damaged repaired by the very act of God resuming his role of rotating the universe. The use of στρέψας here recalls the repeated use of στρέφειν for the rotating movement of the cosmos at 269e-270a (269e5, e8, e9 and 270a2), which likewise refers back to 269c and God's original activity of helping to rotate the universe (συγκυκλεῖ, 269c5). The dual image of the universe as a ship and a living being is maintained in the participle ἐπανορθῶν (set up again, restore), which conveys the general notion of amending and improving and is appropriate both to the situation where a sick person is (in a common idiom) 'put back on his feet' and where a storm-tossed ship is set upright again.

The passage at 273e ends with the living being metaphor dominant, as God is said to make the universe 'immortal' (ἀθάνατον) and 'ageless' (ἀγήρων). Without God's intervention, then, the universe would have grown old and died. A life-cycle emerges: in the beginning God begets the universe (269d8), then the universe matures and develops self-control (273a6-7) but later faces old-age and death. The decline of the ordered organism is proportional to the resurgence of the original state of chaos, which is itself given life at 273c-d as it is spoken of as 'taking control' (δυναστεύει). Scholars are divided on the interpretation of the passage at 273c-d and two different subjects are posited for the verb ἐξανθεῖ. The passage reads (following the *OCT* version):

χωριζόμενος δὲ ἐκείνου τὸν ἐγγύτατα χρόνον αἰὲ τῆς ἀφέσεως κάλλιστα πάντα διάγει, προϊόντος δὲ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ λήθης ἐγγιγνομένης ἐν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον καὶ δυναστεύει τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος, τελευτώντος δὲ ἐξανθεῖ τοῦ χρόνου καὶ μικρὰ μὲν τάγαθὰ, πολλὴν δὲ τὴν τῶν

²²⁵ I read λυθέντα as a deliberate echo of διαλυθεῖς (273d6) and therefore as referring to the physical fabric of the ship as it is wrecked. However, since λύομαι can be used of physical effects on the human body (see LSJ), perhaps it can be taken as a bridge term between the images of ship and living being.

ἐναντίων κρᾶσιν ἐπεγκεραννύμενος ἐπὶ διαφθορᾷς κίνδυνον αὐτοῦ τε ἀφικνεῖται καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ.

The subject for most of the passage is *cosmos*. This is explicitly referred to at 272e8-9 (τοῦ κόσμου) and from then on becomes the subject of a series of participles (masculine) and main verbs (e.g. μεταστρεφόμενος (273a1), ἔχων (273a7), ἀπομνημονεύων (273b2), ἀπετέλει (273b3) etc.). It is *cosmos* that is here the subject of χωριζόμενος, διάγει, ἐπεγκεραννύμενος and ἀφικνεῖται. However, the subject of δυναστεύει (c7) is the noun τὸ πάθος situated next to the verb in the sentence. This much is clear but opinion is divided as to whether ὁ κόσμος or τὸ πάθος is the subject of ἐξανθεῖ (d1). The meaning of d1 is not only crucial to the sense of the passage but also to the pattern of imagery being established in the myth. Skemp and Rowe take τὸ πάθος to be the subject of both δυναστεύει and ἐξανθεῖ. Skemp translates:

When it [the cosmos] must travel on without God, things go well enough in the years immediately after he abandons control, but as time goes on and forgetfulness of God arises in it, the ancient condition of chaos also begins to assert its sway. At last, as this cosmic era draws to its close, this disorder comes to a head. The few good things it produces it corrupts with so gross a taint of evil that it hovers on the very brink of destruction, both of itself and of the creatures in it.

‘It’ in the final sentence of this translation refers not to the disorder but the cosmos once again. Rowe translates:

but in separation from him, during all the time closest to the moment of letting go, it [the cosmos] manages everything very well, but as time moves on and forgetfulness increases in it, the condition of its original disharmony also takes greater control of it, and, as this time ends, comes to full flower, and the goods it mixes in are slight, but the admixture it causes of the opposite is great, and it reaches the point where it is in danger of destruction, both of itself and of the things in it.

The subject of ‘it mixes’ has to be the (masculine) *cosmos* but in this reading it is the ‘original disharmony’ that is the subject of ‘comes to full flower’. In contrast to Skemp and Rowe, Waterfield²²⁶ retains *cosmos* as the subject of ἐξανθεῖ:

But then the helmsman departs. In the period immediately following this release, the universe continues to keep everything going excellently, but as time goes by it forgets his injunctions more and more. Then that primeval disharmony gains the upper hand and, towards the end of this period, the universe runs riot and implants a blend of little good and plenty of the opposite, until it comes close to destroying itself and everything in it.

²²⁶ R. Waterfield (tr.), *Plato, Statesman*.

The structure of this sentence is difficult to follow but it seems too much of a stretch to carry over τὸ πάθος as the subject of ἐξανθεῖ, as Skemp and Rowe translate. *Cosmos* is the general subject of the whole passage and the one-off switch of subject seems permissible only because of the close proximity in word order of the new subject and its verb (δυναστεύει τὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ἀναρμοστίας πάθος).²²⁷ Thus I follow Waterfield in taking *cosmos* as the subject of ἐξανθεῖ, which thus offers an important step in the universe's life.

To the life-cycle outlined above (the universe is born, matures and faces old age and death) two further stages of development can now be added. As chaos reasserts itself the *cosmos* is said to 'run riot' (ἐξανθεῖ, 273d1). When God takes over as ruler and governor once more, he sets about 'turning round' what has been 'sick' and 'broken up' (273e2). Thus as the universe runs out of control, parts of it become sick or diseased (τὰ νοσήσαντα). There is a very interesting interplay of ideas here as the universe is personified and depicted as passing through the different stages of life. When God first withdraws from running the *cosmos*, the child-universe, recovering from the initial upheaval, is able to remember its father's teaching and so manage itself well (273a-b). However, as time passes, it begins to forget these orderly ways and the reassertion of chaos is presented in terms of the universe 'running riot'. This suggests a sort of wayward adolescent stage, where after attaining 'full bloom' the power of the youth spills over and is too strong to be regulated. ἐξανθεῖ means literally 'to put out flowers, bloom' but it is often used with negative connotations to suggest that the plant or flower becomes so vigorous that it cannot be tended and ultimately cannot thrive. This is the development of ideas behind LSJ's translation of the verb in the metaphorical sense of 'degenerate, run wild'.

In her illuminating article, "'Υβρις and Plants', Ann Michelini has discussed the Greek notion of *hybris* as a force at work in the vegetable world, and her evidence helps to uncover the complex of ideas in this passage of the *Politicus*. She raises the question, 'But what is "hybristic" for a plant?' and answers (p. 38):

The plants in question are ἄκαρπα; instead of bearing, they react to abundant nurture by wasting themselves on leaf production. They 'go to branches — ἐκκληματοῦσθαι —' or become 'wood-mad — ὕλομανεῖν'. The latter term, and the related φυλλομανεῖν, suggest that this sort of plant behaviour is — like madness — abnormal, a kind of disease.

Michelini observes that Plato (*Laws* 691c) speaks of *hybris* as (p. 38) 'the condition "in bodies" that might precede disease, and which is the correlative of ὕβρις in souls'. As Michelini considers various Greek texts on *hybris* in plants, she notes how *hybris* itself may be spoken of as growing like a plant (pp. 39-40):

²²⁷ A similar switch occurs at 273b where, although *cosmos* is the general subject, τὸ σωματοειδές takes over as subject of the implicit verb 'to be' at b5, picked up by τὸ . . . σύντροφον and (ἦν) μετέχον.

“ὕβρις itself may be blooming or ‘shooting forth’ (θάλλων) as in two fine passages from Bacchylides (15.57 ff.) and Aeschylus (*Suppliants* 104 ff.) [. . .] Aeschylus also, in a powerful couplet in the *Persians* (821-22) has ὕβρις flowering: ὕβρις γὰρ ἐξανθοῦσ’ ἐκάρπωσε στάχυν/ ἄτης ὄθεν πάγ-κλαυτον ἐξαμῶ θέρος.

Michellini points out that ‘quick hybristic expansion’ may be seen as a phenomenon of youth²²⁸ and, commenting on a similar use of the metaphor of hybris flowering (Sophocles, 718N-786P, where the verb is ἀνθεῖ), concludes: ‘The vegetable metaphor makes a direct line of connection from nurture to growth, to early maturing and sterility, and finally to disease and downfall’ (p. 41). After establishing that plant growth offers ‘a good metaphor’ for ‘the *hybristic* process’ (i.e. ‘an uncontrolled extension or expansion that may lead to disaster’, p. 42), Michellini turns to the matter of how *hybris* can be ‘cured’. The plant image allows a cure in the form of pruning and ‘docking’ by the farmer, ideas which made their way into the Greek moral and religious vocabulary (p. 43). Michellini’s final point on this imagery is useful for understanding our passage (pp. 43-4):

The obviously antisocial quality of the plant’s expansive drives, and the efficacy of the mutilations inflicted on it by the farmer in reducing these drives, were conveniently associated with conflicts between parent and child, or individual and society.

Thus the plant running riot and requiring the attention of the farmer is transposed into the human sphere where the child’s ‘expansive drives’ need to be reduced by its parent. This, I submit, is the image that Plato is presenting through his image of the universe ‘running riot’ (ἐξανθεῖ), as the child-universe gets into trouble and, ultimately, requires the intervention of God, its parent (273d-e). This reading of ἐξανθεῖ at 273d is supported by a repetition of the verb at 310d, in the discussion on how the ruler weaves together the different character-types in the state. Here the Stranger points out that when courage is unmixed with moderation over many generations it leads to madness: κατὰ μὲν ἀρχὰς ἀκμάζειν ρώμη, τελευτῶσα δὲ ἐξανθεῖν παντάπασιν μανίαις (‘it comes to a peak of power at first, but in the end it bursts out completely in fits of madness’). This idea of unmixed courage ‘bursting out’ in 310d is the same usage of ἐξανθεῖ as that at 273d, where the universe, free of paternal authority first finds its own ‘peak of power’ (see 273a-b) but then goes too far and ends up running riot. Commenting on *Politicus* 310d, with its antecedents at 307b-c and 308e-309a (on *hybris*), Cairns (p. 28) concludes:

first, madness is the ultimate consequence of an excess of manliness or daring, as at 307b; we note, therefore, that manliness is said eventually to ‘burst into bloom’ (*exanthein*) with ‘madnesses of all sorts’; the botanical metaphor is

²²⁸ Cairns (‘*Hybris*, dishonour and thinking big’) also notes the association of *hybris* with the young and shows how Plato uses the traditional Greek understanding of *hybris* (pp. 24-31).

familiar in the context of *hybris*, and it cannot be that *hybris* is not in Plato's mind here.²²⁹ This suggests that we are to regard *hybris* and *mania* in 307b as close associates: both are, here as elsewhere in Plato . . . , the result of an excess of vital, masculine energy, analogous to the excess of growth potential which produces *hybris* in plants.

This interpretation is compelling and throws into relief the earlier use of the same association of ideas at 273d1. One might add that in this earlier passage it is also true that Plato has *hybris* in mind. Cairns uses a passage from *Laws* (713c-716b) to show how the various ideas on *hybris* in Plato can be drawn together (p. 30), and the passage provides a close echo of the context and progression of ideas in the *Politicus* myth. First the Athenian uses a myth, second it is a myth of Kronos and a golden age, and third the myth demonstrates how human beings are dependent upon divine authority and suffer disaster when they disregard that authority (Cairns, p. 30):

At 713c the Athenian begins a myth which is used to illustrate the disasters which ensue when human beings order their lives and their communities without deference to an ultimate, divine authority. Human nature is insufficient to order human affairs without *hybris* and *adikia* (713c), and so Kronos places human communities under the rule of *daimones*, whose kingship made for peace, *aidôs*, *eunomia*, and an abundance of justice, and made human peoples free from faction and happy (713c-e). Contemporary communities must, as far as possible, recreate this kind of regime, in which the divine rather than the human is the ultimate source of authority, and foster obedience to the divine in us (713e-714a).

The similarity between this and the *Politicus* passage has been noted before²³⁰ but Cairns' reading of the texts in the light of what they say about *hybris* brings out just how similar the relationships are between human and divine authority in *Laws* and between the *cosmos* itself and divine authority in *Politicus*. Plato's later passage at *Laws* 715e-716b, with its coincidence of ideas with *Politicus*, confirms that the activities and experiences of the *cosmos* in the myth are being modelled on the activities and experiences of a *hybristic* young man. Cairns translates (716a4-b5):

if anyone, raised up by pride, whether exulting in money or honours, or again in bodily beauty (σώματος εὐμορφία) along with youth and senselessness (νεότητι καὶ ἀνοίᾳ), blazes in his soul with *hybris*, as if he needed neither ruler (ἄρχοντος) nor any leader (ἡγεμόνος) at all, but were actually sufficient to lead others, he is left behind deserted by god (καταλείπεται ἔρημος θεοῦ), and, once left behind, he takes to himself yet others of the same kind and romps, throwing everything at once into confusion (ταράττων πάντα ἅμα); to a good many people he seems to be someone, but after a short time (μετὰ δὲ

²²⁹ At this point Cairns observes, 'L. Campbell, *The Sophistes and Politicus of Plato* . . . *ad loc.*, is right to compare A. *Pers.* 821'.

²³⁰ For example, see Gill 'Plato and politics'.

χρόνον οὐ πολύν) he pays to justice (τῇ δίκῃ) no negligible penalty, and utterly destroys himself (ἐαυτὸν . . . ἀνάστατον ἐποίησεν), his household, and his city.

As the young man may exult in 'bodily beauty', so the young *cosmos* gives way to its bodily element (σώματος, 269e1, τὸ σωματοειδές, 273b5); as the young man judges that he needs no 'ruler' or 'guide' (ἄρχοντος, ἡγεμόνος) and is left behind (καταλείπεται ἔρημος) by God, so the *cosmos* is bereft of its ruler and guide (271d4 ἦρχεν; 269e6, ἡγουμένῳ; 269c5 συμποδηγεί, 270a3 συμποδηγεῖσθαι) when God withdraws (ἀπέστη); and as the young man without God's control throws everything into confusion (ταράττων), so the young universe without God suffers 'confusion' both at the time when God departs and later when its own self-control lapses (ταραχῆς, 273a5 and 273d6). In both cases there is a time delay. For the young man this is not long (μετὰ δὲ χρόνον οὐ πολύν), whereas for the universe we must suppose it is a reasonably long stretch, since the whole Zeus cycle lasts thousands of years. In both cases the hybristic behaviour is linked explicitly with injustice: the young man must pay his penalty to justice (τῇ δίκῃ);²³¹ and of the *cosmos* as it gets into difficulty it is said (273d2-3), 'the goods (τάγαθά) it mixes in are slight, but the admixture it causes of the opposite (τὴν τῶν ἐναντίων κρᾶσιν) is great'.²³² Finally, as the young man, without God's rule, eventually destroys himself (ἐαυτὸν . . . ἀνάστατον ἐποίησεν), so the young universe, deprived of God, eventually arrives 'at the very brink of destruction' (273d, ἐπὶ διαφθορᾶς κίνδυνον . . . ἀφικνεῖται). At this point in both cases the disaster affects not only the agent himself but also those connected with him: the young man destroys not just himself but also 'his household and his city', and the *cosmos* threatens to destroy not just itself but also 'everything in it' (273d2-3, ἐπὶ διαφθορᾶς κίνδυνον αὐτοῦ τε ἀφικνεῖται καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ).

The close connection between the *cosmos*' development and that of a hybristic organism continues in the *Politicus* in the idea of the onset of disease. As Micheline and Cairns²³³ have argued, the stage of *hybris* or super-efflorescence in plants and humans is soon followed by disease. In the *Politicus* myth after the universe has 'run riot', God intervenes again and is said to remedy 'what had become diseased' (τὰ νοσήσαντα, 273e1). Thus, as with humans and plants, Plato's youth-universe follows the same development from bursting out in strength to becoming overstretched and consequently ill. The life-cycle of this personified universe is then continued as the Stranger tells how, but for the intervention of God, the universe would face ageing and death (273e3-4).

As God resumes his control over the universe at 273d4 it is stressed that he is the force which first set the universe in order (θεὸς ὁ κοσμήσας αὐτόν). Thus as he sees the universe in disarray, it is natural that he should want to intervene, in order to stop

²³¹ On the injustice of humans, see *Laws* 713c (ἀδικία).

²³² On the injustice of the bodily element, see *Polit.* 273c1 (χαλεπὰ καὶ ἄδικα).

²³³ See 'Hybris, dishonour and thinking big', p. 29, n. 140.

the arrangement he has created being totally destroyed. His act of reparation, fittingly, consists of re-establishing order (κοσμεῖ, 273e3). The metaphors of the storm and sickness intensify the idea of chaos in this passage and are also used, in conjunction with others, to provide different reasons for God's actions: not only is he the ordering power who prevents the collapse into chaos, but also the craftsman who does not want his handiwork destroyed, the helmsman who rescues a ship facing wreckage and the father who steps in to help his child who has become sick.

There is a certain difficulty in this analysis of God's motivation, however, since it is rather strange for a helmsman to leave his ship in mid-journey. While it is true that in the myth the helmsman has not abandoned his ship altogether but is keeping watch on it from an observation post (272e4), nevertheless in terms of this image the universe's failure to run itself properly is hardly surprising, given that a ship with no-one at its helm is hardly likely to stay on course for very long. This is where the build-up of images comes to Plato's aid, for the other presentations of God active in this passage give good 'reasons' for God's absence: a craftsman does not continue to work on a completed object and a father must allow his child to develop independently.

The act of God in taking over the rudder is simultaneously his reassertion of order amidst chaos. While there is truth in de Marignac's comment (p. 67) that 'le dieu entreprend une action de réparation, de mise en ordre qui n'a rien de commun avec le travail du pilote',²³⁴ the main point here is that Plato has made it quite clear that God is not merely the pilot of the ship of the universe but is also the father of the universe-child and the force which has previously ordered and governed that which is now in chaos. These passages of the myth only make sense if one bears all the different images in mind. Indeed the extraordinary power of this section of the myth derives from the multiple associations and suggestions of all these ideas working together. The image of the helmsman rescuing the ship in danger of wreckage is very powerful but still it does not express all the aspects of the situation that Plato wants, as he tries to convey the drama of chaos reasserting itself. As well as shipwreck, Plato also draws on the ideas of a crafted object being smashed and a child becoming sick. Each of the images presents a different view of God — as ordering force, craftsman, father and pilot — and the power of the passage is the result of the interaction of all the images.

Plato thus uses his different metaphors to establish a graphic picture of the dependence of the universe on God and of God's care for the universe he has created — a picture which derives its impact both from the drama of the sea-rescue and from the emotive image of a human being who has passed through the different phases of life and is now facing death. In view of this de Marignac's statement that the helmsman metaphor is used on its own in the *Politicus* myth has to be corrected. Indeed, if Plato had used the metaphor on its own, it would be inadequate to represent God as a creative, sustaining and concerned (κηδόμενος, 273d5) force. The metaphor of the

²³⁴ 'God undertakes an act of reparation of a sort that bears no relation to the work of a pilot'.

helmsman is very useful for conveying the sense of God's power and orderly control over the universe. Further, it gives a good reason for God's desire to steer the universe out of danger, since it is part of the helmsman's job to guide his ship to safety. But this metaphor has no creative associations and does not suggest benevolent care — ideas that Plato requires to make his picture fully effective. Thus Plato supplements the helmsman image with those of craftsman, father and benevolent ruler. Further, the image of the universe as a ship cannot account for the reassertion of order (and subsequently chaos) from within, whereas the child remembering and then forgetting parental instruction, with the associated images of youthful exuberance followed by illness, presents a convincing model for the changes in the universe's experience. Thus the different images are closely interwoven in this passage and the helmsman metaphor should not be viewed in isolation from the rest. Here Plato presents an extremely rich and complex account of the relationship between God and the universe, and to attempt to understand it fully one must try to follow all the threads of his thought. As so often, Plato's use of imagery is an invaluable guide.

IV. Laws 905d-907b

In this section of the *Laws* the Athenian has set out to prove three propositions about the gods:

- (1) that they exist;
- (2) that they care for human beings;
- (3) that they cannot be bribed.

After the Athenian has proved the first two of these propositions to his satisfaction, there follows the passage at 905d-907b where he sets out his argument for the third. He is clearly opposed to the idea and determined to prove his case (905d): 'No one should ever assent to this thesis, and we must fight to the last ditch to refute it.' He begins his argument rather truculently (905d8): 'Look — in the name of the gods themselves! — *how* would they be bought off, supposing they ever were? What would they have to be? What sort of being would do this?' (tr. Saunders).²³⁵ To answer his own question about what sort of beings the gods are, he makes the following deduction (905e2-3): ἀρχοντας μὲν ἀναγκαῖόν που γίγνεσθαι τοὺς γε διοικήσοντας τὸν ἅπαντα ἐντελεχῶς οὐρανόν ('Well, if they are going to run the entire universe for ever, presumably they'll have to be rulers').²³⁶ Cleinias assents and the Athenian warms to his theme (905e5-906a2):

²³⁵ Unless otherwise specified, the translation of *Laws* used throughout this section will be that of Saunders.

²³⁶ As Saunders observes (p. 440, n. 15), the Athenian's thought develops from his earlier views at 903b that there is an arch-controller of the universe (τῷ τοῦ παντός ἐπιμελουμένῳ) who has arranged everything down to the smallest detail and that there are further ruling powers who work alongside him (ἀρχοντες).

‘Ἄλλ’ ἄρα τίσιν προσφερεῖς τῶν ἀρχόντων; ἢ τίνες τούτοις, ὧν δυνατόν ἡμῖν ἀπεικάζουσι τυγχάνειν μείζοσιν ἐλάττονας; πότερον ἡνίοχοί τινες ἂν εἶεν τοιοῦτοι ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων ἢ πλοίων κυβερνῆται; τάχα δὲ καὶ ἀπεικασθεῖεν στρατοπέδων ἀρχουσί τισιν· εἴη δ’ ἂν καὶ νόσων πόλεμον εὐλαβουμένοις ἰατροῖς ἐοικέναι περὶ σώματα, ἢ γεωργοῖς περὶ φυτῶν γένεσιν εἰωθυίας ὥρας χαλεπὰς διὰ φόβων προσδεχομένοις, ἢ καὶ ποιμνίων ἐπιστάταις.

Now then, what sort of ruler do the gods in fact resemble? Or rather, what rulers resemble them? Let’s compare small instances with great, and see what rulers will serve our purpose. What about drivers of competing teams of horses, or steersmen of boats in a race?²³⁷ Would they be suitable parallels? Or we might compare the gods to commanders of armies. Again, it could be that they’re analogous to doctors concerned to defend the body in the war against disease, or to farmers anxiously anticipating the seasons that usually discourage the growth of their crops, or to shepherds.

This is an intricate passage which deserves close attention. The comparisons of charioteers, helmsmen, generals, doctors, farmers and shepherds are suggested as types of rulers who resemble the gods. There are several types of ‘government’ in this list and indeed there are various ideas incorporated into the list that have little to do with government *per se*; namely, chariot races, the war against disease and the effect of the seasons on the growth of crops. It is in these, apparently casual, details that the Athenian introduces ideas which he will later develop and exploit.

The first comparison is with ‘charioteers of competing teams of horses’ (ἡνίοχοί τινες . . . ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων). If the Athenian were only interested in the idea of government, then the image of the charioteers, suggesting power and control, would be sufficient on its own. But by introducing the additional idea of the charioteers being involved in competition the Athenian lays the ground for a later point. The second comparison is with helmsmen of ships (πλοίων κυβερνῆται, 905e8), an image that occurs elsewhere in Plato’s work as he seeks to convey the role of gods as rulers of the universe,²³⁸ and the third with army generals (στρατοπέδων ἀρχουσί, e9). So there are three different images of authority and control, with one (the charioteer image) introducing competition. The next two comparisons are more intricate as governship and control are joined with various different ideas. The fourth comparison is with ‘doctors concerned to defend the body in the war against disease’ (νόσων πόλεμον εὐλαβουμένοις ἰατροῖς . . . περὶ σώματα, e9). A doctor can be seen as a ruler in that he takes decisions regarding the welfare of his patients and issues instructions to them.

²³⁷ Saunders follows Taylor (‘Plato, *Laws*’) in taking the participle ἀμιλλωμένων (competing) to agree with both ζευγῶν and πλοίων. Both ideas of charioteers and helmsmen feature again at 906e and, whereas the idea of competition is important in the later context of the charioteer, it is not mentioned in that of the helmsman. This suggests that ἀμιλλωμένων is to be understood as agreeing only with ζευγῶν, as Bury translates in the Loeb edition.

²³⁸ See *Polit. etc.*; references can be found in appendix 1.

But with πόλεμος (war) the Athenian adds to the idea of government that of defence against an enemy. War is relevant to the previous image of army generals but, interestingly, was not mentioned explicitly there. Through comparison with doctors defending the body against disease the gods begin to emerge as not only the rulers but also the defenders of human beings. This suggestion of defence and protection is continued in the next comparison where the type of ‘ruling’ in question is that of farming. Here the gods are compared with ‘farmers anxiously anticipating the seasons that usually discourage the growth of their crops’ (γεωργοῖς περὶ φυτῶν γένεσιν εἰλωθείας ὥρας χαλεπὰς διὰ φόβων προσδεχομένοις, 906a1-2). The care of the doctors for the well-being of their patients (εὐλαβουμέν-οις, e10) is now echoed in the farmers’ concern for their crops. Similarly, where the doctors fought the enemy of disease, the farmers ‘anxiously’ (διὰ φόβων) anticipate the ‘harsh seasons’ (ὥρας χαλεπὰς). In both the medical and agricultural image a three-way relationship is established where the ruler (doctor, farmer) cares for his charges (patients, crops) in the face of an external threat (disease, harsh weather). The final comparison, with ‘overseers of flocks’ (ποιμνίων ἐπιστάταις), moves away from the explicit notion of defence back to the basic idea of ruling. The shepherd metaphor is traditionally used for rulers²³⁹ and, although the idea is not explored here, the metaphor is used elsewhere by Plato to suggest the gods’ benevolent care for humankind. The Athenian introduced this list of comparisons as a list of rulers and governors but he has also brought in, in a rather casual way, the notions of competition and defence against enemies. While defence is one aspect of the art of government, it is not a direct metaphor for government itself. These extra ideas are brought in to lay the ground for the later development of the argument.

The notion of war is immediately taken up after the series of comparisons for the gods, when the Athenian suggests that human beings are waging an eternal ‘battle’ against evil (906a):

Now since we’ve agreed among ourselves that the universe is full of many good things and many bad as well, and that the latter outnumber the former, we maintain that the battle (μάχη) we have on our hands is never finished, and demands tremendous vigilance.

He then takes a crucial step in his argument by asserting that the gods are our ‘allies’ in this battle (906a6): σύμμαχοι δὲ ἡμῖν θεοὶ τε ἅμα καὶ δαίμονες (‘however, gods and spirits are fighting on our side’). This characterisation of the gods as our allies in war has been prepared for by the comparisons of the doctor waging war on disease and the farmer fearing the seasons as his enemy. The assertion that the gods fight a constant war against evil rests upon the proposition that the gods are good — a proposition established (or taken for granted) earlier in Book X: at 899b the souls that are the cause of the heavenly phenomena are described as ‘perfectly virtuous’ (ἀγαθὰ δὲ πᾶσαν ἀρετήν) and are identified as gods; at 900d-e the Athenian refers again to this

²³⁹ See Chapter 3 on the shepherd image.

'perfect virtue' of the gods and assumes the interlocutors' agreement (ὁμολογοῦμεν) that the gods are good; and finally at 901e the interlocutors' agreement is explicitly given as the Athenian points out 'the five of us have already agreed that the gods are good — supremely so, in fact' and Cleinias responds 'Emphatically' (Σφόδρα γε). This later section of Book X relies on such faith in the gods' goodness (see also 906b on the gods' virtues) .

The Athenian now turns his attention (906b) to the people who attempt to bribe the gods with 'ill-gotten gains' (Saunders). He tells how these people 'in their brutish way' (θηριώδεις, 906b4) prostrate themselves before their guardians (πρὸς τὰς τῶν φυλάκων ψυχάς) and try to persuade them that 'they have the right to feather their nest (πλεονεκτοῦσιν, 906c1) with impunity at mankind's expense' (Saunders). The 'guardians' (τῶν φυλάκων) here are not those of an earthly kind but those that watch over us all, i.e. the gods. Three different types of guardian are presented: 'watchdogs, shepherds or masters of the utmost grandeur' (κυνῶν . . . τῶν νομέων . . . τῶν παντάπασιν ἀκροτάτων δεσποτῶν, 906b5). The shepherd image has already been used at 905e but the presentations of the gods as 'dogs' and 'despots' is new here. The idea of the gods as masters and men as their possessions is mentioned at 906a7 (ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ κτήμα θεῶν καὶ δαυμόνων) and at various points in the dialogues,²⁴⁰ but the idea of the gods as watchdogs is particular to this passage. The image itself, however, is established before Plato and indeed has a marked political reference. Brock discusses animal imagery in political contexts in the period between 480 and 385 B.C. and devotes a section to 'the watchdog of the state' (pp. 131-4). He comments (pp. 132-3):

The one significant image of the period is that of the dog, particularly in the form 'watchdog of the people'. The Paphlagonian represents himself as such in the oracle contest (*Eq.* 1017-19, 1023-4; . . .), as does the Dog in the trial scene in *Wasps* (929-30 . . .). This image evidently became a standard claim in Athenian politics (cp. Dem. 25.40, Theophr. *Char.* 29, Plut. *Demosthenes* 23 . . .). Pl. *Laws* 906b,d implies that it was one of the standard images for holders of authority. [. . .] This comfortable image presents politicians as trusty and essential servants of the demos (no doubt deserving commensurate rewards).

The switch of image from gods as shepherds to gods as watchdogs does not, at first sight, significantly change the relationship between gods and humans: humans are still flocks of sheep and control is simply administered by a sheepdog rather than a shepherd. But in this short passage evil men have become 'brutish' (θηριώδεις) and the gods have also become animals. The darker undertones of canine imagery are already established in the pre-Platonic literature. Brock continues (p. 133):

²⁴⁰ See e.g. *Phdo.* 62b8, 62d3, 63c2; *Polit.* 274b5; *Crit.* 109b7 (for other references, see appendix 1).

dogs, however, can also be thieves, and both Cleonian dogs, as well as Labes, are depicted as such (*Eq.* 1031-4, *Vesp.* 834-6, 904, 910-1, 928, 958, 971-2; n.b. Taillardat, pp. 414-5).

The significance of Plato's switch of image will become evident a few lines later.

The Athenian now turns to the subject of 'acquisitiveness', observing that when this appears in the body it is called 'disease', when it is caused by the seasons it is called 'plague' and when it occurs in society is called 'injustice'. Saunders explains the reasoning behind this idea (p. 441, n.17): 'Disease, plague and injustice are all thought of as examples of *excess*, the encroachment of one element in the body, *etc.*, on the others'. Now it becomes apparent that the doctor and farmer comparisons suggested for the gods (at 905e) were not simply aimed at exploring how the gods exercise their governorship but also served to prepare for this idea of acquisitiveness as disease in the body and as plague amongst crops. Thus, since the doctor and farmer are shown as concerned to protect their charges against these very ills, and since these figures are suggested as viable comparisons for the gods, the Athenian is able to reinforce his point that the gods are our allies against evil. It emerges, then, that the gods, like doctors and farmers, are waging a war not only against evil in general, but also against acquisitiveness in particular, which manifests itself in society as 'injustice'. Since the gods are already emerging as allies in the war against injustice, it is a relatively easy step to 'prove' that they cannot be bribed by evil men.

In the next section of his argument the Athenian develops the animal image that he introduced obliquely a few lines earlier (906c8-d6):

Τούτον δὴ τὸν λόγον ἀναγκαῖον λέγειν τὸν λέγοντα ὥς εἰσὶν συγγνώμονες αἰεὶ θεοὶ τοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀδικοῖς καὶ ἀδικοῦσιν, ἂν αὐτοῖς τῶν ἀδικημάτων τις ἀπονέμῃ· καθάπερ κυσὶν λύκοι τῶν ἀρπασμάτων σμικρὰ ἀπονέμοιεν, οἱ δὲ ἡμερούμενοι τοῖς δόροις συγχωροῖεν τὰ ποίμνια διαρπάζειν. ἄρ' οὐχ οὗτος ὁ λόγος ὁ τῶν φασκόντων παραιτητοὺς εἶναι θεούς;

Thus anyone who argues that gods are always indulgent to the unjust man and the criminal, provided they're given a share in the loot, must in effect be prepared to say that if wolves, for instance, were to give watch-dogs a small part of their prey, the dogs would be appeased by the gift and turn a blind eye to the plundering of the flock. Isn't this what people are really suggesting when they say that gods can be squared?

In the simile (καθάπερ) the gods are sheepdogs guarding their flock while evil men are wolves wanting to ravage the flock and trying to secure the sheepdogs' compliance by promising a share of the spoil. This is a highly effective image for two reasons: first because the suggestion of wholesale slaughter is shocking and second because the image is internally coherent, with the sheepdogs, sheep and wolves representing the gods, innocent and wicked men in a scenario that makes sense on both levels. It is now clear why the Athenian used the neutral formulation ποιμνίων ἐπιστάταις at 906a

and why he introduces the idea of sheepdogs at 906c. For this simile would not work if the gods were presented in human guise. It is only the common canine nature of wolves and dogs that gives the wolves any hope of the dogs accepting their offer of part of the spoil (ravaged sheep). Within the simile itself the relationship between wolves, dogs and sheep is entirely consistent but also these relationships effectively represent what would happen if the gods were venal. For in this case the gods would allow evil men to harm the innocent on condition that they would receive some of the benefit themselves, for example, turning a blind eye to financial exploitation or robbery if they were to receive an offering from the proceeds. Just as the deal between wolves and dogs depends on their common canine nature, so the deal between venal gods and wicked men would depend on their common evil and unscrupulous nature. Thus the simile brings out very effectively that if the gods could be bribed, they would not only be neglecting their duty of protecting men but also actually joining forces with the wicked to harm the innocent for their own gain. The simile, then, highlights how the view that the gods can be bribed stands in utter contradiction to their perceived role as kindly protectors and as σύμμαχοι ('allies') in the battle against evil and acquisitiveness. By translating the situation of evil men supplicating the gods into the very striking and extreme terms of the wholesale slaughter of the innocent and defenceless, the Athenian can make his point forcefully and convincingly.

After winning Cleinias' unqualified agreement that this is indeed the significance of the view that the gods can be bribed, the Athenian returns to his original list of comparisons (906d8-e1):

Τίσιν οὖν δὴ τῶν προρηθέντων ἀπεικάζων ὁμοίους φύλακας εἶναι θεοὺς
οὐκ ἂν καταγέλαστος γίγνοιτο ἀνθρώπων ὅστισοῦν;

So consider all those guardians we instanced a moment ago. Can one compare gods to any of them without making oneself ridiculous?

The list of 'rulers' (ἄρχόντων) originally introduced at 905e has now become a list of 'guardians' (φύλακας). The notion of 'rulers' arose from the idea that the gods 'run' or 'administer' (διοικήσοντας) the universe, but as the passage progresses there is a subtle shift from the idea of control to that of care, and the gods emerge as the protectors of human beings (the basis of the wolf/sheepdog simile). The image of the gods as protectors serves the Athenian's argument much better than that of them simply as rulers, whose goodness and goodwill is, of course, far from assured. So now the gods are our guardians, and to assess whether they can be compared to the rulers in the former list, the Athenian selects the helmsmen comparison and asks (906e1-3):

πότερον κυβερνήταις, λοιβῇ τε οἴνου κνίσῃ τε παρατρεπομένοις αὐτοῖς,
ἀνατρέπουσι δὲ ναῦς τε καὶ ναύτας;

What about steersmen who are turned from their course 'by libations and burnt offerings' and wreck both the ship and its crew?

The phrase *λοιβῇ τε οἴνου κνίσῃ τε παρατρεπομένοις* is a clear echo of lines from the *Iliad* (9, 499-501), as Saunders, Taylor and England all point out. In the Homeric passage Phoenix urges Achilles to tame his anger and says that even the gods can be 'turned' (*στρεπτοί*):

καὶ μὲν τοὺς θυέεσσι καὶ εὐχολῆς ἀγανῆσι
λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ²⁴¹ τε παρατρωπῶσ' ἄνθρωποι
λίσσόμενοι, ὅτε κέν τις ὑπερβῇ καὶ ἀμάρτη.

Even they are turned from their course by sacrifice and humble prayers, libations and burnt-offerings, when the miscreant and sinner bend the knee to them in supplication (tr. Rieu).

The lines in Homer tell how the gods can be won over and yet Plato uses them in an argument designed to prove the very opposite. While the wider subject of the Platonic passage is the probity of the gods, the particular vehicle used for the tenor of gods at the moment is that of helmsmen, and thus what Plato, or the Athenian, actually asks here is: 'can the gods be compared to helmsmen who are won over by libations and burnt offerings?' The Homeric background provides the information that these (human) helmsmen would be bribed by gifts in the very same manner as Homer's gods, which offers a very pleasing fusion of tenor (gods) and vehicle (helmsmen bribed like Homer's gods).

Cleinias rejects this comparison for the gods, on the grounds, presumably, that it presents them as not only corrupt but also foolish (these helmsmen succeed in wrecking their ship). He has already firmly accepted the proposition that the gods are good and is hardly likely at this point to accept a contradictory view. At 906e the Athenian invites Cleinias to think that he has selected the helmsman image as a random example from the original list in order to show that all the comparisons are absurd. But the relevant comparison in the original list was simply with *πλοίων κυβερνήται* (the helmsmen of vessels), which as it stands is far from ridiculous, since it is used elsewhere for quite serious purposes (e.g. in the myth of the *Politicus*). What makes the image ridiculous here is the development whereby the helmsmen are willing to take a bribe that will result in the destruction of their own ship. By translating the idea of the gods being won over by gifts into these rather extreme and disastrous terms, the Athenian not only weights the image itself to make it seem ridiculous but also highlights the

²⁴¹ Plato has introduced wine into Homer's phrase *λοιβῇ τε κνίσῃ* to give *λοιβῇ τε οἴνου κνίσῃ τε*. Saunders and England ignore the addition of 'wine' whereas Taylor is so taken with it that he forgets about the burnt offerings and renders Plato's passage: 'seamen who are "turned from their course by 'flow and fragrance' of wine" and overturn vessel and crew'. Taylor has evidently taken *οἴνου* as the attributive genitive of both *λοιβῇ* and *κνίσῃ*, even though, as LSJ tell, *κνίσῃ* is the term for 'the steam and odour of fat which exhales from roasting meat' — an odour quite different from the 'fragrance' of wine. Plato has perhaps included the idea of wine to make the offerings more appropriate to his (human) sailors.

discrepancy between the wickedness (and stupidity) of such an act and the perceived goodness and power of the gods. The Athenian's point, therefore, rests not on the image of the gods as helmsmen but as wicked and foolish helmsmen, an image he can be sure that Cleinias will reject.

Having gained Cleinias' assent that the gods cannot be compared to wicked helmsmen, he pushes the point about bribery (906e5-7):

‘Ἀλλ’ οὐτι μὴν ἡνιόχοισι γε ἐν ἀμίλλῃ συντεταγμένοις, πεισθεῖσιν ὑπὸ δωρεᾶς ἐτέροισι τὴν νίκην ζεύγεσι προδοῦναι.

And presumably they are not to be compared to a charioteer lined up at the starting point who has been bribed by a gift to throw the race and let others win.

The gullible Cleinias calls this a ‘scandalous comparison’ (δεινὴν . . . εἰκόνα) and, predictably, rejects it out of hand. Again this is not the image first presented at 905e, where the comparison was simply with ἡνίοχοι ζευγῶν ἀμιλλωμένων, whose goodness at that point was not in doubt. It now becomes clear that competition was introduced into the first charioteer comparison simply to prepare the ground for this later development, since a race (ἐν ἀμίλλῃ) is a perfect context for susceptibility to bribes. The Athenian goes on to discredit all the former comparisons, saying of the gods: ‘Nor, of course, do they stand comparison with generals or doctors or farmers or herdsmen, or dogs beguiled by wolves’. The comparison of gods to dogs beguiled by wolves is of the sort to provoke the predictable reaction from Cleinias (Εὐφήμει; πῶς γὰρ ἄν; ‘What blasphemy! The very idea!’) but the Athenian has not in any way shown that the comparisons with generals, doctors, farmers or herdsmen are at all inappropriate or blasphemous; indeed he has himself already used some of these images to convey the serious idea that the gods are our ‘allies’ in the ‘war’ against acquisitiveness. The Athenian requires his audience to understand the phrase πεισθεῖσιν ὑπὸ δωρεᾶς (906e) as pertaining not only to the ἡνιόχοισι, who now stand revealed as corrupt, but also to the series of other experts, who have not been similarly indicted. Nevertheless the rhetorical build-up has been enough to convince Cleinias that all the experts could be similarly corrupted.

The Athenian concludes his case with an expansive flourish (907a2-3):

‘Ἀλλ’ οὐ πάντων φυλάκων εἰσὶ μέγιστοι καὶ περὶ τὰ μέγιστα ἡμῖν οἱ πάντες θεοί;

Now aren't the gods the most supreme guardians of all, and don't they look after our supreme interests?

— a proposition that wins unqualified assent (Πολύ γε). Thus the argument ends and at 907b the Athenian checks whether all three theses about the gods — that they exist, that are concerned for us and that they are ‘absolutely above being corrupted into flouting justice’ — have all been adequately proved (ἰκανῶς ἀποδεδείχθαι), to which Cleinias replies: ‘Certainly and we endorse these arguments (λόγοις) of yours’.

How far the Athenian has actually made a convincing case is debatable, but it is clear that the various images and comparisons for the gods are used very much for rhetorical purposes in this passage. The whole argument works on the basis that if the gods could be bribed by gifts, then they would put other interests before those of looking after human beings and thus would neglect their duty. The conflict between this view and the belief that the gods are good is underlined by the use of scenarios where the neglect has very serious consequences: the sheep are slaughtered and the ship overturned. Thus the images show in very vivid terms what the view of the gods as venal actually entails, when taken to its logical conclusion. The results then clearly conflict with the idea that the gods are good, an idea already established dialectically. The Athenian's technique is to use some images to support belief in the gods' goodness and others to highlight the conflict between this goodness and the idea that they can be bribed in order to lead Cleinias to the conclusion that one of these views must be false. As the whole weight of the argument suggests that belief in the gods' goodness is justified, then the other view must be wrong. So Cleinias is persuaded that the gods cannot be bribed. However the merits of this argument are judged, the comparisons and images are integral to it. Thus, as the Athenian wins his case, the verbal εἰκόνες can be seen to have played an important and effective rhetorical role in this passage of *Laws*.

V. Conclusions

Analysis of these three passages shows how Plato uses images and metaphors for the gods in conjunction with one another in order to convey particular ideas, to create extended pictures of divine activity and to achieve particular rhetorical effects: the switch from the shepherd to the helmsman image in the *Critias* allows Plato to avoid the issue of human free will, which could cause problems in the golden age picture; the various images for God in the *Politicus* myth work together to create a complex and emotive picture of God's power and the universe's dependence on him; and in the dialectical exchange of the *Laws* Plato shows the Athenian manipulating a range of images in order to persuade Cleinias that the gods cannot be bribed. The passages from the *Critias* and *Politicus* demonstrate how images can be used in the build-up of a narrative while the excerpt from the *Laws* gives a different angle, showing how images can be presented and received in a dialectical exchange. Perhaps the main difference between the two contexts of narrative and dialectic is that, whereas *Critias* and the Stranger weave their images into the fabric of the stories, the Athenian uses (on the whole) explicit comparisons, drawing attention to their status as possible models for God. The narrative context of the myths allows the speaker a certain freedom in the development of his images but the *Laws* passage shows that even without this a skilful speaker can make full use of the rhetorical power of imagery.

These three passages reflect the beliefs that the gods create and control the universe and that they are good. The images and metaphors at one level work to express

these views and thus, as argued at the end of Chapter 3, play an illustrative role. However, this is not to say that the different images and metaphors simply restate Plato's beliefs in different ways. For the images work in their contexts to flesh out and to enlarge upon ideas which follow from the beliefs mentioned above: the *Critias* passage seeks a satisfactory model for the manner of God's control; the *Politicus* myth dramatises the creative and sustaining power of God; and the *Laws* passage sets out to refute a view that conflicts with belief in the gods' goodness. In order to answer the question of how far metaphors are indispensable to Plato's theological discourse, it must be borne in mind that much of this discourse is concerned not with speculation about the divine nature but with the exposition, amplification and defence of certain firmly-held beliefs. The passages examined here demonstrate that images and metaphors are integral to the exposition of Plato's views and to his rhetorical methods. For the most part Plato uses these images not so much to gain or convey insight into the divine nature but to present more effectively various ideas and beliefs he already holds and has already stated about the gods. Thus it can be concluded that, even on the illustrative view, metaphors must be judged as indispensable to Plato's discourse on the gods.

5. Soul and Body

I. Introduction

The subject of Chapters 3 and 4 was the nature and significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods. In Chapters 5 and 6 the focus will shift to another invisible and immortal element operating (in Plato's view) in human life: the soul. Although there are occasions when the human soul is represented as a plant, animal, place or inanimate object (see appendix 2), for the most part the soul, like the gods, is portrayed in anthropomorphic terms. These chapters will therefore offer more of Plato's 'images of persons unseen' and will continue to assess their cognitive and rhetorical significance. Discussion about the soul occupies a great deal of space in the dialogues: the interlocutors debate many aspects and experiences of the soul — such as its nature and value, its rational activity and its fate in the afterlife. Because of the wealth of this material I have limited my study to two central concerns: (Chapter 5) metaphors for the relationship of soul and body; and (Chapter 6) metaphors for the inner nature of the soul.

In Chapter 1 (section V) three distinct areas of inquiry relating to the soul were set out: theological speculation on transcendental and religious experience; psychological accounts of rational and emotional behaviour; and sociological and philosophical debates on morality. Plato's ideas on soul can be roughly divided into three areas: first, accounts of the soul's immortality and how it is joined with and separated from the body; second, accounts of how the soul and body relate to each other during the period of human life; and third, the nature of the soul itself. Although these areas necessarily interlink, one can still broadly distinguish their perspectives: first, the soul's immortality and its union with the body raise religious and transcendental questions; and second, the issues of how soul and body relate to each other during life and the nature of the soul itself raise psychological, behavioural and moral questions. The subject of this chapter will be what part metaphors play in Plato's accounts of the relationship between soul and body. This does not explicitly involve issues of morality but does encompass aspects of religious experience and accounts of rational and emotional behaviour.

Towards the end of Chapter 2 I argued that the illustrative thesis and Eva Kittay's version of the epistemic view offer the accounts most likely to explain the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors. On the illustrative thesis metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things that can be said in literal terms. Kittay and other critics, however, reject this view, maintaining that some metaphorical statements simply cannot be 'reduced' or 'translated' into literal terms. The key question for Chapters 5 and 6, then, is whether any of Plato's soul metaphors are irreducible and cognitively irreplaceable. The question can also be framed in the following way: are there in the dialogues theories or ideas about the soul which are *only*, and which *can* only be, expressed in metaphorical terms? As I said in Chapter 2, the answer to this question is by

no means obvious and it is now time to address this matter in detail, beginning with the metaphors used for the relationship between soul and body.

It was argued in Chapter 2 that Plato treats the soul as an aspect of human experience that can be known and understood. Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of the soul that Plato is not fully confident about, and these include issues relevant to the study of soul and body: what exactly happens to the soul after death and how precisely the soul is connected to the body. In the following sections I shall attempt to assess how metaphors are used in these contexts and how they relate to abstract or literal²⁴² statements on the same issues. My study of the soul/body relationship will concentrate on two main areas: first, the immortal nature of the soul as the principle of life (encompassing the experiences of human birth and death); and second, how soul and body relate to each other during human life. Major groups of metaphors for these areas include the journey of the soul, the imprisonment, binding and sowing of the soul in the body, the soul as ruler or master of the body and the corruption and purification of the soul.

II. The Immortal Soul

For Plato soul is the immortal principle of life: soul gives life and movement to the body and on the death of the body continues to live independently. In various dialogues the view is expressed that the soul experiences successive rebirths in mortal bodies.²⁴³ At birth the soul is said to enter the human body and at death to leave it, and these processes are portrayed in a number of different ways: the soul travels from place to place, sometimes living in a human body, at other times journeying on to a new home; the perfect soul is winged and flies freely but sometimes, as a result of imperfection, loses its wings and is imprisoned or bound in a mortal frame; and soul is sown as a seed in the human form which thus becomes the soil in which it grows. In this section I shall examine these images and metaphors in more detail, tracing their development and commenting on the contribution of each group.

1. Journeys and Homes

In the *Phaedo*, as Socrates faces imminent execution, debate centres around the nature of death. At 64c Socrates identifies death as the 'release' or 'departure' (ἀπαλλαγή)

²⁴² The question of what constitutes literal language for soul in Plato will be debated below (section 5.IV).

²⁴³ For discussion of Plato's views on the immortality of soul, see: Rowe, *Plato*, pp. 163-78; Solmsen, 'Plato and the concept of the soul', pp. 358-60 and 365-7; Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo*, pp. 179-91, and 'Plato's image of immortality'; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 321-5; Robinson, *Plato's Psychology*, pp. 125-31; McGibbon, 'The fall of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*'; Hackforth, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*'; Luce, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*: a reply'; Nilsson, 'The immortality of the soul in Greek religion', pp. 13-16 and Rohde, *Psyche*, pp. 463-76.

of the soul from the body. After the death of the individual, the soul will be separate from the body and will exist independently of it (τότε γὰρ αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ ἔσται χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος, 66e6-67a1). The idea that the soul exists 'with' the body in life (συνόντος, 68a3) and exists apart from it in the afterlife (χωρίς, 64c, 66e, 76c *etc.*) leads to the notion that at birth the soul 'enters' the body (εἰς ἀνθρώπειον σῶμα ἀφικέσθαι, 77b7) and at death 'goes away from' it to another place. From general terms of motion (εἶμι, ἔρχομαι, οἴχομαι *etc.*) develop various detailed pictures of the soul as a human being undertaking a journey to another world. Plato is influenced by traditional Greek religion with its deeply ingrained idea of the soul's departure to Hades — an idea that goes back to Homer.²⁴⁴ Plato draws on Homeric ideas about the soul throughout the dialogues²⁴⁵ and it is entirely natural for him, following Greek religion, to use anthropomorphic language for the soul. While it is true that this is a standard way of speaking about the soul, nevertheless within this framework there is great scope for Plato to create novel and fresh ideas, as he develops his own unique perspectives.

From the basis of traditional ideas and from his own belief that the soul is with the body in life and separate from it in death, Plato developed the notion of the soul journeying from place to place, moving into the body at birth, leaving it upon its death and travelling on to different places in the afterlife. The image of the soul's journey is developed extensively in the dialogues so that amongst many other metaphors the soul travels in boats (*Phaedo* 113d), is escorted by a guide along the many-forked path to the underworld (*Phaedo* 108a-b), travels in a great company, and encamps in a meadow (*Republic* 614e).²⁴⁶ In the *Phaedrus* Plato defines soul as 'that which moves itself' (245c-246a) and presents the soul as eternally in motion. Movement is a key theme of the *Phaedrus*, as Anne Lebeck²⁴⁷ has discussed, and in the first section of the central myth Plato uses various metaphors for the soul on its travels. Lebeck observes the variety of images (pp. 269-70):

the concept of the soul as a self-moving entity capable of ascent is symbolized by the wing. The soul itself is represented by a winged chariot, the forces within it by a charioteer and pair of horses, its varying states and conflicts . . . by different kinds of motion: an army on the march, a chariot race at the games, the procession of a religious celebration, or wandering from life to life until the movement of the heavens has come full circle.

For Plato soul is a natural traveller, and in different dialogues soul can be seen employing various modes of transport as it undertakes its cosmic journeys.

²⁴⁴ See J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (pp. 74-88) and M.P. Nilsson, 'The immortality of the soul in Greek religion' (p. 3).

²⁴⁵ See e.g. *Crat.* 403c-e; *Gorg.* 523a-b and *Rep.* 386d-387b.

²⁴⁶ See appendix 2 (Group A) for all references.

²⁴⁷ Anne Lebeck, 'The central myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*'. On the significance of motion in the *Phaedrus* and Plato's philosophy at large, see esp. p. 284.

Closely connected to the image of the soul as a traveller is the metaphor that it has different dwellings: at one time in the body and at another elsewhere. In the *Timaeus* the parts of the soul are 'housed' (κατφκισαν, 70a3, b2, e2 *etc.*) in the body, and in the *Phaedrus* the soul 'settles' (κατοικισθεῖσα, 246c3) into a body. In the *Apology* (40c8) and *Phaedo* (117c2) death is spoken of as a 'change in habitation' (μετοίκησης), and in these works, when Socrates is speaking in more ordinary, non-philosophical terms, he talks of death as an ἀποδημία, 'a going or being abroad' or 'a going or being away from home' (*Apology* 41a5; *Phaedo* 61e2, 67c1). Thus the soul is presented as at home in the body, and its separation at death becomes a journey to and a stay abroad. This reflects the common fear of death as a journey from the familiar to an unfamiliar world. But Plato turns this idea on its head as he develops the notion of the soul's true home.

The idea that the soul has a home or native dwelling place emerges in the *Phaedo* (79d), as Socrates describes how the soul, when investigating things by itself, passes into the realm of the pure, everlasting, immortal and changeless. The soul is then described as συγγενής — 'of the same kin, descent or family' — as the beings of this realm (79d). Thus the soul, far from being at home in the body, is a close relative of beings native to a very different place.²⁴⁸ In the *Timaeus* the soul is again shown as having an affinity with a world beyond human existence. At 41d the Demiurge creates souls equal in number to the stars and assigns each soul to a star. Before the souls are placed in human form, they are shown the nature of the universe and the laws of destiny (41d-e). Once in human form, if a man²⁴⁹ lives righteously, his soul returns after death to its assigned star (42b3-5):

καὶ ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούς, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἀστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἔξει.

And he who should live well for his due span of time should journey back to the habitation of his consort star and there live a happy and congenial life (tr. Cornford).

So the star is portrayed as a 'home' (οἴκησιν) for the soul, and the attainment of life in this home is the reward for virtue in human, male life. In contrast, those souls that live unrighteous lives in their first birth pass at the second birth into the form of a woman (a woman being cast as an inferior being to a man, see 42a). An unrighteous life in this birth would be followed by a further life as an animal (42c) and so, in terms of the journey image, the soul would be condemned to travel through different lives until it won, through virtue, a return to its first and true home in its appointed star. The sexism of this idea is blatant since in these terms no female has a home-star; the welcome return home is gained after a successful male life and so for the soul the female state represents a further separation from home than that of the male. In terms of the return

²⁴⁸ See also *Phdo.* 81a and 84b.

²⁴⁹ Since women rank below men in the order of reincarnations (42b5-c1), direct access to the home star is the prerogative of the male.

journey, the soul of a male is closer to home than the soul of a female. In the passage at 42b the reference to living a βίον εὐδαιμόνα καὶ συνήθη ('a happy and accustomed life') creates an explicit link between the return home and the attainment of happiness — an idea which gives the metaphor rhetorical force, as Plato sets out the benefits of living virtuously. Such happiness is but one step away for the male and two for the female.

Plato develops, then, the idea that the soul is truly at home when it is separate from the body and that it is happy when it can live in a place with which it has a natural affinity. Thus the body becomes a temporary home which cannot offer the soul the same kind of familiarity or happiness. When viewed in this way, it is the soul's entry into the body that is its ἀποδημία, and death offers a chance to return home. Thus death can be seen as a joyous experience for the soul — a point that is made in the *Timaeus* when it is said that on the death of the body the soul μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο ('with pleasure flies away', 81d7-e1).

Although death is a release of the soul from its temporary home, this does not mean that it automatically returns to its natural home. For it is only the soul of the man who lives righteously that can achieve this (*Timaeus* 42b). The souls of the unrighteous have a very different experience, as is described in the *Phaedo* and in Plato's other myths of judgement. In terms of the journey and home image, all souls are conveyed after the death of the body to new 'habitations' (οικήσεις, *Phaedo* 114d3). Each soul makes its way to an 'appropriate dwelling' (πρέπουσαν οἰκησιν, *Phaedo* 108c3): the righteous to beautiful and pure dwellings where they will be happy (καθαρὰν οἰκησιν, *Phaedo* 114c1; οικήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους, *Phaedo* 114c4-5; μακάρων νήσους . . . οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ, *Gorgias* 523b1-2), and the unrighteous to dark and forbidding places such as Tartarus where they will be punished for their vices (*Phaedo* 113e-114b; *Gorgias* 523b).

While the myth of the *Phaedo* presents a contrast between good and evil souls departing to live in places of happiness or terror, an earlier passage draws a different contrast between departing souls. At 81a-e Socrates tells how souls that have practised philosophy depart to the invisible, divine realm, whereas the non-philosophical souls are unable to detach themselves from the visible, corporeal world and so face a very different kind of afterlife journey. The philosophical soul 'departs' (ἀπέρχεται, 81a5) to the unseen world where it will be 'happy' (εὐδαιμόνι, 81a6) and will be (81a6-8):

πλάνης καὶ ἀνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν
τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἀπηλλαγμένη.

released from its wandering and folly, its fears and wild lusts, and other ills of the human condition (tr. Gallop).

The noun πλάνη (wandering), occurring in close conjunction with ἀνοία (folly), is probably best understood as connoting error and intellectual confusion — one of the

ills of the human condition. Plato often uses the image of wandering in this way,²⁵⁰ a usage that can be traced back to Parmenides.²⁵¹ However, Plato combines this notion of intellectual wandering with that of wandering on a spiritual journey when he tells of the fate of the non-philosophical souls. These souls have been so involved with the body's concerns during life that at death they cannot detach themselves from the corporeal world. Departed from the body but unable to depart completely from earthly life, the non-philosophical soul 'is rolled around' (κυλινδουμένη 81d)²⁵² in graveyards, still partly visible as a shadowy apparition. Socrates explains why such souls are in this predicament and what will subsequently befall them (81d6-9):

καὶ οὐ τί γε τὰς τῶν ἀγαθῶν αὐτὰς εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὰς τῶν φαύλων, αἱ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀναγκάζονται πλανᾶσθαι δίκην τίνουσai τῆς προτέρας τροφῆς κακῆς οὐσης. καὶ μέχρι γε τούτου πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ σωματοειδούς, ἐπιθυμία πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα·

and they're likely to be the souls not of the good but of the wicked, that are compelled to wander about such places, paying the penalty for their former nurture, evil as it was. And they wander about until, owing to the desire of the corporeal element attendant upon them, they are once more imprisoned in a body (tr. Gallop).

The non-philosophical souls 'wander' around places that hold dead bodies, signifying their incomplete separation from the human bodies they once inhabited. This is their punishment for wickedness, and this state of separation from, but yearning for, the corporeal will continue until they are reborn in another body. These souls will never escape from the visible realm until they detach themselves from physical concerns and so, until such time, will endure successive rebirths in mortal bodies. This idea of souls condemned to wander between different mortal lives recalls Empedocles' *Purifications* where the sinful are condemned to pass through a series of births and deaths. Empedocles presents this reincarnation in terms of separation from the gods and of 'wandering' (Fragment 115, lines 6 and 13):

τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,

...

²⁵⁰ See e.g. *Soph.* 230b, 245d; *Phdr.* 263b; *Rep.* 505c; *Hipp. Maj.* 304c; *Hipp. Min.* 372e, 376c; *Alc.* 117a-118b.

²⁵¹ Parmenides, Fr. 6, 4-6: βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν/ πλάττονται, δίκρανοι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν/ στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλεκτὸν νόον.

²⁵² Compare *Phdr.* 257a2, where this verb is again used of the afterlife experience of the non-virtuous soul, as it is condemned to be 'rolled around and beneath the earth for nine thousand years with no understanding' (ἐννέα χιλιάδας ἐτῶν περὶ γῆν κυλινδουμένην αὐτήν καὶ ὑπὸ γῆς ἄνου). I have discussed the relationship between the motifs of wandering and rolling in Plato and earlier Greek literature in my article 'Plato's moving *logos*'. I argue that these two types of motion are used to signify disturbance and form part of a widespread contrast in Plato whereby orderly motion represents knowledge and rationality and disorderly motion represents ignorance and irrationality.

τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης

he wanders away from the blessed ones for thrice ten thousand seasons,

...

of them I am now one, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer

(tr. McKirahan, p. 235).

Thus Plato adapts Empedocles' ideas to his own view of the effect of philosophy on the afterlife experience of souls. At 81a the philosophical soul departs to the invisible, divine and immortal realm, where, freed from πλάνης (wandering, confusion) and other human ills, it will spend the rest of time μετὰ θεῶν (with gods). In contrast the non-philosophical soul has no escape from the mortal world and is forced to 'wander' (πλανᾶσθαι) as a punishment until it enters another body. The notion of wandering, as an exile, separated from one's home, is charged with emotive power for the Greeks, as is clear from the *Odyssey*. Throughout the epic wandering is associated with hardship, suffering and isolation,²⁵³ and at 15.340 ff. Odysseus proclaims: 'Than wandering (πλῆγος) nothing else is more evil for mortals'. By using the idea of wandering in the depiction of 'lost' souls Plato is drawing on a well-established and evocative image to support his claim that the practice of philosophy has considerable afterlife benefits for the soul. Plato uses the idea of wandering to create a causal link between intellectual confusion in earthly life and spiritual displacement in the afterlife, thus reinforcing his argument that virtue and its rewards are won through knowledge.²⁵⁴ The image of wandering, with the related metaphors of the soul's homes and various journeys, helps Plato to recommend philosophy, since it is only through knowledge and virtue that the soul can depart safely and return to its true home — whether that is understood as its appointed star or as the immortal, invisible realm. In more general terms Plato uses the imagery of journeys to convey the ideas that the soul has a separate existence from the body, that it does not cease to exist along with the body at the point of its death and that human life is but one stage of the soul's experience.

2. Wings

The striking metaphor of the winged soul offers an alternative account of how the soul enters and leaves the human body. This metaphor is used extensively in only one Pla-

²⁵³ On wandering in Homer (and other Greek poetry), see Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind* (pp. 31, 83, 121 and 176) and *Whom Gods Destroy*, ch. 10, 'Madness as "Wandering"' and ch. 11 'Resonances of Wandering'. For notable instances of the motif of wandering in Homer, see *Il.* 10. 91-2 and *Od.* 15.343. Other references in *Od.* include: 1.2, 75; 3.95, 252; 4.325; 6.278; 13.204; 14.43; 15.312; 16.64, 151; 17.511; 20.195; 21.363; and 24. 307. I discuss the use of wandering in Homer, Plato and other Greek writers in 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

²⁵⁴ Lebeck (pp. 285-7) observes the connection between intellectual confusion and the wandering of the disembodied soul in her comments on *Phdr.* 257a1-2 and 263b5-9.

tonic dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, where it appears as part of the central myth.²⁵⁵ At the beginning of this myth, as Socrates starts to tell what the soul is like, he explains how soul and body are first united (246b7-c6):

[ψυχὴ] τελέα μὲν οὖν οὔσα καὶ ἐπτερωμένη μετεωροπορεῖ τε καὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον διοικεῖ, ἡ δὲ πτερορρυήσασα φέρεται ἕως ἂν στερεοῦ τινοῦ ἀντιλάβηται, οὗ κατοικισθεῖσα, σῶμα γήινον λαβοῦσα, αὐτὸ αὐτὸ δοκοῦν κινεῖν διὰ τὴν ἐκείνης δύναμιν, ζῶον τὸ σύμπαν ἐκλήθη, ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα παγέν, θνητόν τ' ἔσχεν ἐκωνυμίαν·

Now when it is perfectly winged [soul] travels above the earth and governs the whole cosmos; but the one that has lost its wings is swept along until it lays hold of something solid, where it settles down, taking on an earthy body, which seems to move itself because of the power of soul, and the whole is called a living creature, soul and body fixed together, and acquires the name 'mortal' (tr. Rowe).

The perfect soul is winged (ἐπτερωμένη) and 'travels through the air' (μετεωροπορεῖ), but a soul that has lost its wings (πτερορρυήσασα) is 'swept along' (φέρεται) until it 'lays hold of' (ἀντιλάβηται) something solid where it 'settles' (κατοικισθεῖσα) and makes a new home. This is the point at which the soul 'takes on' (λαβοῦσα) a body — which must represent the moment of birth for the living creature. From now on the body receives the power of movement from the soul. The verbs ἐπτερωμένη, μετεωροπορεῖ, πτερορρυήσασα²⁵⁶ and φέρεται are consonant with the idea of a winged creature first able to move itself and later carried by an outside force (unspecified) when it loses its wings and thus its ability to fly. The notion of the soul settling itself (κατοικισθεῖσα) in the body continues the journey/home image, as discussed in the previous section. Thus the activity of the free soul is rendered more easily comprehensible through this comparison with a winged being. The difficulty of trying to describe the actions of this non-corporeal being in less coloured terms can be seen in Plato's use of the verbs ἀντιλάβηται and λαβοῦσα, which do not offer any clues as to how this intriguing process of 'laying hold of' and 'taking on' a body actually occurs. In contrast, the wing metaphor provides an account that is easier to visualise of how the soul can move freely and why it should cease to do so.

Socrates does not explain how or why the soul loses its wings until 246dff. Here he tells how 'the plumage of the soul' (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πτέρωμα) is 'nourished and increased' (τρέφεται τε καὶ αὐξεται) by the good things that derive from the divine, while under the influence of their opposites 'it wastes away and perishes' (φθίνει τε

²⁵⁵ Lebeck offers an excellent account of the wing image and its interaction with other images in the myth (pp. 269-280).

²⁵⁶ De Vries comments on this verb (p. 128): 'After πτερορρυήσασα the pap. inserts (probably) πως. [...] Alline thinks that, as πτερορρυεῖν is "properly" said of birds Plato may have wished to attenuate the metaphor. But is it a metaphor?' De Vries' query seems odd, since there would seem to be no grounds for taking this unusual usage as a literal expression for the nature of the incorporeal soul.

καὶ διόλλυται). A little later this metaphor of the soul's nourishment is developed so that it is the *vision* of the Forms that provides the necessary food for the soul. Thus the act of seeing becomes the act of consuming truth (ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὄν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τὰ ληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ, 247d).²⁵⁷ As long as a soul can see something of the vision of truth, it will remain 'unhurt' (ἀβλαβῆ, 248c5). But when a soul cannot achieve this vision, a radical change occurs. In terms of the image of the procession of gods, Socrates tells how the soul that cannot follow adequately cannot see the vision properly (248c5-8):

ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπένθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, καὶ τινι συντυχίᾳ χρησαμένη λήθῃς τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῇ, βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πτερορρυήσῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ.

but whenever through inability to follow it fails to see, and through some mischance is weighed down by being filled with forgetfulness and incompetence, and because of the weight loses its wings and falls to the earth (tr. Rowe).

Here Socrates gives three reasons why the soul falls to earth: (a) as a result of not being able to follow the procession properly, it cannot see the vision of truth; (b) as a result of some 'mischance' (τινι συντυχίᾳ) it is weighed down by forgetfulness and 'evil' (λήθῃς τε καὶ κακίας); and (c) as a result of this burden it loses its wings. The first 'reason' is easy to understand: unless the soul can keep up with the procession, it will not secure a place from which it can see the necessary vision. In (b) it is not clear what the 'mischance'²⁵⁸ refers to, and the presence of τινι serves to reinforce the vagueness. Plato does not clarify whether this mischance is consequent on missing out on the vision or whether it is a secondary cause. Nevertheless, *something* causes the soul to be 'filled' (πλησθεῖσα) with forgetfulness and evil and so to 'become heavy' (βαρυνθῇ).²⁵⁹ The metaphors are multiplied in this passage as Plato seeks to bind together his different accounts of why the soul falls. In (a) the image of soul can be understood as a development of the picture of charioteer and horses (from 246a, 247b), where the soul's chariot joins in the procession of the gods in heaven to view the spectacle of the Forms. The soul/chariot cannot keep up and so the charioteer cannot 'see' the vision. In (b) the idea of weight comes into play as some 'mischance' causes the soul to be 'weighed down'.

²⁵⁷ See also 248b-c where the vision of truth (ἰδεῖν) provides the pasturage (ἡ νομή) by which the soul is fed (τρέφεται).

²⁵⁸ On the role of chance in this fall, see Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, pp. 133-5, who concludes (p. 135): 'We are not to feel guilt over our embodiment, since after all Plato's point is that we should view it as a contingency, an accident; yet we are not therefore simply to exonerate ourselves from all sense of responsibility as human agents in this matter, for if we do, we shall perpetuate the very ignorance which the myth asks us to acknowledge as a factor in the fall'.

²⁵⁹ On the reasons for the fall, see A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 73-4: 'Though the account is incomplete, its message is that divinity depends upon cognitive success, and incarnation on cognitive failure' (p. 74). Price makes the same point in *Mental Conflict* (= MC), p. 77.

This metaphor of the soul receiving weight has already been established in the myth. In his brief introduction to the subject of wings Socrates explains (246d6-7):

πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθεῖς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ.

The natural property of a wing is to carry what is heavy upwards, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods resides (tr. Rowe).

At this point 'what is heavy' is not further defined but the idea is incorporated into the charioteer and horses image so that the second horse, which has evil in its nature, is described as *weighted* by that evil (247b3-5):

βρίθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάκης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων ᾧ μὴ καλῶς ἢ τεθραμμένος τῶν ἡνιόχων.

for the horse which is partly bad weighs them down, inclining them towards the earth through its weight, if any of the charioteers has not trained him well (tr. Rowe).

Thus Plato uses a metaphor of weight or heaviness for evil, so that the presence of evil actually drags downwards whatever it occurs in. The evil in the bad horse makes it heavy (βαρύνων), and so this is a constant factor that the charioteer must take account of as he tries to balance his team.²⁶⁰ If the charioteer has trained this horse well, the weight of the evil can (one supposes) be balanced somewhat, so that it does not disturb the running of the team.²⁶¹ At work in this idea is the established polarity between up/good/divine and down/evil/human.²⁶² Plato often speaks of the divine sphere as higher than the mortal world²⁶³ and skilfully manipulates the polarity in order to argue that what is down/evil/human does not have to remain fixed but can change its state and so become up/good/divine. If the soul in human life, after its fall, is able to achieve a more perfect state, it will return upwards to the immortal realm. In terms of the vehicles of these metaphors the two agents of change are weight and wings. A heavy burden will cause a body to tend downwards but if the weight is lifted, the downward pull is removed. Further, even if something remains heavy, a wing can still raise it upwards. In terms of the tenor of the metaphors the agents of change are the

²⁶⁰ On wings and weight, see Lebeck p. 270.

²⁶¹ On the notion of balance inherent in this passage, see Price (*MC*, p. 81): 'The taming of appetite produces a better balanced soul, like a biplane no longer liable to plunges, responsive to its pilot and poised for ascent'.

²⁶² On the use of oppositions in Greek thought, see: Lloyd, *PA*, ch.I 'Theories based on opposites in early Greek thought', pp. 15-85; and J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, ch.7 'Between the beasts and the gods', pp. 130-67. Vernant detects certain 'codes' at work in Greek myths and on the story of Adonis observes (p. 134): 'the decoding of the body of evidence is based upon a series of oppositions linked with one another: above-below, earth-heaven, wet-dry, raw-cooked, corruptible-incorruptible, stench-perfume, mortal-immortal; these terms . . . are organised into a coherent system'.

²⁶³ See e.g. *Tim.* 90a and *Laws* 905a. Plato also often uses the idea that the world of the Forms is above the mortal realm: see *Rep.* 517b5, c9, 518b4, 525d5, 527b10, 529b4 etc.

exercise of moral virtue (through training), the development of rationality and the positive influence of love. Weight is identified with evil,²⁶⁴ and the way to balance or lift the weight of evil is through the proper training of the horse by the charioteer. Within Plato's tripartite theory of soul the charioteer represents the rational part of soul and the bad horse the appetites. Thus the charioteer training the horse represents the rational part of the soul training the appetites. So by educating the appetites and making them more moderate the weight of evil in the soul can be lifted so that the soul can move up the scale towards divinity.

In terms of the vehicles of these metaphors the second agent of change is the wing, for if the soul can grow wings it will have another chance of moving upwards from the corporeal to the divine sphere. The means whereby a soul can grow wings becomes a key theme in Plato's myth (251b-d), as the growth is stimulated by the stream of beauty that emanates from the beloved and enters into the lover's soul. Lebeck explains how Plato connects the theme of the soul's wings with its experience of love at first sight and its memory of the Forms (pp. 272-3):

When a soul has come fresh from the mystery of Being, the beauty which it sees here awakens memory and a yearning for its winged state. [. . .] At the recollection aroused by this radiance, the soul feels its wings, long withered, start to sprout.

In the detailed passage at 251a-252b Plato's description of how the soul grows wings is, as Lebeck notes (p. 273), 'an aggregate of images'. The image of the soul's plumage is merged with the idea of a plant's foliage so that the luxurious growth in each case is, in part, produced by the warming stream of water. There is a further build-up of imagery as the idea of the base of the new feathers²⁶⁵ pushing up through the wing is likened to new shoots pushing up through the soil and to new teeth cutting their way through gums (251c).²⁶⁶ Lebeck observes the onomatopoeic quality of the passage and its erotic connotations (p. 273):

Many of the words have multiple associations and some of them are onomatopoeic. As a result they tease both the mind and ear, and the passage produces that tickling irritation which it so well describes. Thus the delineation of sexual excitement stimulates intellectual excitement, the two being, for Plato, inextricably linked. [Note 15] Even the wing itself, symbol of the soul's capacity for elevation, functions in this passage as a sexual symbol. Growing wings, raising up the wings, suggest an erection.

In the three images of feathers, shoots and teeth the upward movement of the new growth prefigures the upward movement of the soul from the earthly to the divine realm. This language of upward motion for enlightenment (i.e. the development of

²⁶⁴ On Plato's use of the idea of weight in *Phdo.* and *Phdr.*, see Price, *MC*, p. 76.

²⁶⁵ On the relationship between the feathers and wings of soul, see Price, *MC*, p. 81.

²⁶⁶ Lebeck (pp. 273-6) tracks the development of imagery in the passage, as Plato moves from wings to plants and on to medical terminology.

rationality and moral goodness through philosophical education) permeates Plato's writing.

To return to the passage at 248c5-8, the third reason why the soul falls to earth is (c) its loss of wings. The loss is directly caused by the burden of forgetfulness and evil. But why are the wings unable to support the new burden? The answer would seem to lie in the double determination of the loss of perfection: as the soul drops because of evil it can no longer be kept aloft by what is good. The wings are the power which support the soul in the divine realm, and represent the immortal and divine element in a soul (246d). Once its perfect nature becomes flawed, the soul cannot stay close to the divine; the wings that represent its perfection are lost and so the soul falls. This fall leads to the first birth of the soul in a human body (248d1-2), and so a human birth occurs when a once perfect soul becomes imperfect. The soul is now separated from the gods. Once the soul has entered the cycle of rebirths it can only regain its wings (πτερωθεῖσαι, 249a4, 249c4; ὑπόπτεροι, 256b4) by developing its rational capacities and achieving both knowledge and moral goodness. Because it is only through recollection of the Forms that the soul can become close again to the gods, 'it is with justice that only the mind (διάνοια) of the philosopher becomes winged (πτεροῦται)' (249c4-5). Soon the idea of wings is transferred from the soul/mind to the whole person, as Socrates tells how the philosopher's desire to fly upwards to the gods causes him to be regarded as mad (249d):

ἔστι δὴ οὖν δεῦρο ὁ πᾶς ἦκων λόγος περὶ τῆς τετάρτης μανίας, ἣν ὅταν τὸ τῆδὲ τις ὄρων κάλλος, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀναμνησκόμενος, πτερωταί τε καὶ ἀναπτερούμενος προθυμούμενος ἀναπτέσθαι, ἀδυνατῶν δέ, ὄρνιθος δίκην βλέπων ἄνω, τῶν κάτω δὲ ἀμελῶν, αἰτίαν ἔχει ὥς μανικῶς διακείμενος.

Well then, the result of my whole account of the fourth kind of madness is clear — the madness of the man who, on seeing beauty here on earth, and being reminded of true beauty, becomes winged, and fluttering with eagerness to fly upwards, but unable to leave the ground, looking upwards like a bird, and taking no heed of the things below, causes him to be regarded as mad (tr. Rowe).

Socrates concludes that this is the best kind of divine possession and that it is this experience of loving real beauty that renders a man a true lover (249e). The simile of the stranded bird²⁶⁷ offers a tender image of the plight of the soul whose wings struggle in vain against its earthbound body. As earlier in the myth (246b-c), the solid earthiness of the body tends downwards while the soul longs to fly upwards, and the inertia of the body is in tension with the lively movement of the soul. The fluttering of wings also suggests the excitement of erotic arousal.

The *Phaedrus* myth is the only place where Plato develops the idea of the winged soul and this would seem partly due to the particular definition of soul given before the

²⁶⁷ On the bird image, see Lebeck, p. 273.

myth — namely, self-movement (245e). For the wing metaphor, unlike the image of a traveller returning home, depicts the soul in its perfect state as in perpetual motion: journeying on high (μετεωροπορεῖ, 246c) and living a life of happiness *travelling* in the divine sphere (φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν μετ' ἀλλήλων πορευομένου, 256d8-e1). Friedländer suggests (p. 193) that the winged *Eros* is a possible model for Plato's winged *psyche*, and Ferrari points out how Plato's choice of the image of charioteer and horses recalls the earlier love poetry of Anacreon.²⁶⁸ These images are indeed erotic and through them Plato is able to fuse their tenor and vehicles. For the effects of love on the perpetually moving soul (tenor) are described in terms of both erotic language (winged cupid and sexual control) and movement (as the wings fly upwards and the team drives onwards). This fusion of ideas in turn supports Plato's vision of the soul as the source of emotion *and* motion. As well as fitting the particular subject-matter of the passage, the images also complement Plato's choice of setting. Lebeck (p. 280) has noted how the prologue of *Phaedrus* is intimately connected with the myth:

The prologue which creates a setting for the central myth has much in common with it. Both myth and prologue translate the same ideas into a story which unfolds in time and space; motifs and images which describe states of being in the myth appear in the prologue as part of the scenic background and the personal exchange between Socrates and Phaedrus. [. . .] In this way the setting introduces elements used later to describe love's symptoms and the soul's growth of wings: heat, flowing liquid and vegetation.

Thus the countryside setting with its lush trees and grass (230b3-5, 230c3-5), its cool stream (230b6-7), the noonday sun (229a, 242a) and busy insect life (230c2-3) forms the perfect backdrop for soul metaphors which include the growth of plants, a stream of water, fever and winged movement. This organic relation between Plato's choice of setting and his imagery of soul can also be seen in *Phaedo* and *Charmides*. In *Phaedo* Socrates' prison cell becomes the setting for images of soul as a prisoner, bound in the body (see appendix 2) and in *Charmides* the gymnasium provides an appropriate backdrop for images of the soul's health and exercise (see appendix 2).

Although the winged soul does not appear elsewhere in Plato outside the *Phaedrus*, there is an echo of it at *Timaeus* 81e, where the soul is presented as 'flying away' from the body at death (81d7-e1): [ψυχῇ] ἡ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο ('and she [soul], when thus set free in the course of nature, finds pleasure in

²⁶⁸ Ferrari, *Cicadas*, pp. 107-8 (with n. 26) and p. 265, n. 21. The imagery of horses and riders in homoerotic imagery is discussed by Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 58-9 (see p. 163 on Plato's charioteer). Dover cites Theognis 1249-52 (where a boy is compared to a horse which needs a good charioteer) and 1267-70 (where a boy is like a horse which has cast one rider into the dust and now bears another). Dover observes, 'the imagery of horse, reins and rider is familiar with reference to heterosexual intercourse from Anacreon fr. 417'. See also Anacreon fr. 360 for the idea of the soul's 'charioteer' (τῆς ἐμῆς / ψυχῆς ἡνιοχέυεις).

taking wing to fly away', tr. Cornford). The idea that the soul can fly is already established in Homeric poetry where one of the ways that the soul leaves the body at death is by flying away,²⁶⁹ and where once in the underworld the souls 'flit' (ἀΐσσουσι) and 'fly' (πταμένῃ, ποτέονται) like 'bats'.²⁷⁰

The metaphor of the wings of the soul provides an account of how soul and body are first joined together — as the perfect soul loses its wings and falls to earth — and how the presence of soul (as that which moves itself and that which in its perfect state is in perpetual motion) gives life and movement to the otherwise inert mortal body. The idea of wings also explains (at the metaphorical level) how good souls can leave the body at death and fly upwards to the heavenly sphere, while inferior souls, still wingless, are unable to make this journey and so must remain in the cycle of births and deaths.

3. Seeds and Plants

A third Platonic metaphor for the coming together of soul and body at the point of birth is that of the soul as a seed sown into the soil of the body. In the *Phaedo* the soul is described as 'implanted' (ἐμφυεσθαι, 83e1) and 'as it were sown' (ὥσπερ σπειρομένη, 83e1) in the body, and at *Phaedrus* 248d1 Socrates speaks of the 'planting' (φυτεύσαι) of a soul into an animal. However, this metaphor for birth and death is developed extensively only in the *Timaeus*, where it plays a significant role in the explanation of how the Demiurge creates humankind and how the body can create further life through procreation. The metaphor is introduced at 41c8 as the Demiurge speaks of 'sowing the seed' (σπείρας) of the immortal part of the soul, and is continued at 41e4 when it is said that the souls, or rather parts of souls, created by the Demiurge are to be 'sown' (σπαρείσας) into the 'instruments of time' (tr. Cornford) adapted to them. These 'instruments of time' (ὄργανα χρόνων), or physical bodies, become places in which the seed can grow (φύναι, 42a1). At 42a3 the placing of souls in bodies is described as 'implanting' (ἐμφυτευθεῖεν) and at 42d4 it is said that the creator 'sowed' (ἔσπειρεν) some souls in the earth, some in the moon and some in the other instruments of time. The metaphor is continued at 42d6 as Timaeus tells that μετὰ τὸν σπόρον (after the sowing) the creator committed to the younger gods the task of fashioning mortal bodies. During this sowing, it would seem that the soul-seeds are scattered into unformed matter which will only later be worked into bodily form.

The next development of this metaphor comes at 73b-c where it is expanded into a larger picture of plant life. In this section the creator places the different forms of soul into the marrow of the human body. First the 'bonds of life' which unite soul and body are said to be 'rooted' or 'planted firmly' (κατεππιζοῦν, 73b4) in the marrow, and

²⁶⁹ See Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, pp. 17 and 73.

²⁷⁰ See *Il.* 16.856, 22.363; *Od.* 10.495, 24.6. See also *Rep.* 386d-387a on Homeric views. The specific metaphor of the soul having wings is not used in these passages but Plato's novel idea is clearly influenced by the notion that the soul can fly.

second the creator is described as 'planting' (φύτεύων, 73c3) the different kinds of soul in the marrow. This picture is then given greater detail as the rational part of the soul is assigned to a particular portion of the marrow (73c6-d1):

καὶ τὴν μὲν τὸ θεῖον σπέρμα οἷον ἄρουραν μέλλουσαν ἔξειν ἐν αὐτῇ περιφερῇ πανταχῇ πλάσας ἐκωνόμασεν τοῦ μυελοῦ ταύτην τὴν μοῖραν ἐγκέφαλον.

And he moulded into spherical shape the ploughland, as it were, that was to contain the divine seed; and this part of the marrow he named 'brain' (tr. Cornford).

Through the simile οἷον ἄρουραν the marrow becomes the 'tilled, arable land', or simply the 'soil', for the divine seed — that is, the rational part of the soul. It is entirely appropriate that this part of the soul, reason, which was 'sown' by the Demiurge at 41c8, should now be 'planted' in the marrow that will form the brain. However, Cornford understands this passage as referring to semen (p. 295 n.1):

That 'the divine seed' here means the semen is explicitly stated at 91b1. It is 'divine' as being part of the marrow which contains the immortal part of the soul, and also as being the vehicle and means of the immortality of the species.

However, it is not explicitly stated at 91b that 'divine seed' at 73c7 means semen, for 91b states simply: μυελὸν . . . ὃν δὴ σπέρμα ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν λόγοις εἶπομεν ('marrow . . . which indeed we called "seed" in our earlier discussion'). Marrow has been called 'seed' (σπέρμα) at 74a4 and 74b3. I am not arguing that σπέρμα at 91b does not indirectly refer to semen — it must, as the semen is the part of the marrow that becomes the life-carrier. But at 91b1 it is the μυελός that is directly referred to as σπέρμα, and it is μυελός that is said to 'have life' and to become 'endowed with respiration' (ὁ δὲ, ἅτ' ἐμψυχὸς ὢν καὶ λαβὼν ἀναπνοήν). Since the participles here are masculine, not neuter, it is the (masculine) marrow which is explicitly said to create in us the love of procreation (91b4). Thus the semen is not directly referred to as σπέρμα, and still less as θεῖον σπέρμα, and these terms must refer rather to the rational part of the soul. Cornford himself point out (p. 353) that τὸ θεῖον is used at 76b, 90a and 90c4 to mean simply 'the brain', and this usage stems from the idea that the brain contains the rational and immortal part of the soul.

The confusion here arises from Plato's use of the term σπέρμα (seed) for both the rational part of the soul and for the marrow into which it is placed. Why does he use the same term for both? The metaphor of the soul as a seed (σπέρμα) is appropriate for expressing how soul is introduced into the body. First, it offers a familiar picture of how one entity can be placed inside another, and second, the connotations of life and growth effectively convey how the soul animates the body. The ordinary Greek term for semen was σπέρμα and, when Plato identifies marrow with semen at 91b, it is natural that he should use the same term for both. But the double use of the term 'seed' for both soul and marrow also produces a very neat effect. The idea of marrow as both soil for the soul-seed and as seed itself presents the marrow as a mediator between the

first act of creation and all subsequent acts. For when the marrow receives the soul, it is acting as its soil, providing an environment in which it can grow. But also, through receiving the soul, marrow itself becomes 'instinct with life' (91b) and thus becomes the seed from which further human life will develop. By imaging the marrow as both soil and seed Plato provides an illustration of how the Demiurge and lesser gods create humankind and how the body in turn can itself create further life, through procreation. The creator implants the soul-seed into the marrow-soil. The marrow then becomes the male body's own seed (semen) which will be sown into a woman's body. In turn, the woman's body becomes the new ἄρουρα, the new soil for the seed (91d2-3): εἰς ἄρουραν τὴν μήτραν . . . κατασπείραντες. Further, by using the same term for the rational part of the soul and for the semen — both of which are associated with the marrow — Plato can suggest a very close connection between life and rationality.

The final development of the metaphors of seeds and plants in the *Timaeus* comes at 90a6-8 where human beings are spoken of as 'a plant of a heavenly nature' (φυτὸν οὐκ ἔγγειον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον) and where the head is referred to as the 'root' of human beings (τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ῥίζαν ἡμῶν). Both of these ideas derive from the metaphor of the rational part of the soul as a divine seed: like the seed of a plant, the immortal soul is the original and primary part of the being, and as a seed pushes upwards in its growth, so the immortal part of the soul (according to the polarity of up/divine and down/earthly) strains to move upwards from its earthly existence towards the divine. The inversion of ideas here, where humans are shown as having their origins not on earth but in the heavens, is part of Plato's rhetorical project of convincing his audience that the traditional Greek views on life, death and the relationship between gods and men must be jettisoned in favour of the 'true' account of the life of the immortal soul. While from a limited perspective humans are 'earthly' plants, the bigger picture shows that their roots and their seeds come from the heavens. Thus, although our earthly perspective makes us think that the feet are the lower part of man and the head moves away from these origins on earth towards the heavens, a true, philosophical perspective shows that the top part of man (his head) is actually the root, which entails that the rest of the human plant grows downwards towards the earth. Thus Plato playfully inverts the established polarity of up and down so that movement works in two directions. First from top to bottom: in terms of origins, human beings come from heaven down to earth and in terms of the body as a plant, the head (normally perceived as the top) is actually the root so that the rest of the plant must grow 'downwards'. Second from bottom to top: in terms of spiritual development the soul now encased in the body must ever strive 'upwards' in order to get back to its divine origins.

The metaphor of sowing or planting the soul is similar to the images of the journey and wings in that it presents a version of how soul and body come to be united when a living creature is born. However, unlike the former images, the metaphor of the soul as a seed offers no account of the departure of the soul upon the death of the body. For, apart from the notion of 'uprooting' the plant for re-bedding elsewhere (an idea which Plato does not develop), it is difficult to imagine how the human 'plant' can move

from one life to the next. Similarly, there is no way for the human plant simply to cease to exist while leaving the original seed (the immortal soul) intact. The metaphor thus breaks down at this point. But in one important area the metaphor of soul-seed has advantages that outweigh those of the journey and wing images. For the soul-seed is far more effective than the others in offering an account of the generation of new life through procreation, since the soul-seed animates the marrow which, as semen, becomes itself the carrier of life. Thus Plato uses his different metaphors alongside one another to exploit their individual potential and to overcome their particular limitations.

4. Bonds

The final group of images and metaphors in this section describes both the coming together at birth and the separation at death of soul and body. On a number of occasions Plato presents birth as the process whereby soul is bound to or imprisoned in the body and death as the process whereby all bonds are loosened and the soul is set free. The imagery of bonds is used in different ways in three dialogues: the *Phaedo*, *Cratylus* and *Timaeus*. In the *Phaedo* the language of imprisonment and bonds develops, like the journey image, from the idea that death is the ἀπαλλαγή (64c5) of the soul from the body. As discussed above, ἀπαλλαγή can mean 'departure' but can also mean 'release' — an idea which leads easily into more colourful metaphors of the removal of bonds and shackles. At 67d4 Socrates sets out the view that death is: λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος ('the freeing and separation of soul from body'). If death is the λύσις (freeing, unloosening) of soul from body, then conversely birth is the tying or binding of soul in body — an idea which is presented at both 81e2 and 92a1. At 81e2 the souls that are unable to depart after death to the invisible realm are said to 'wander' until: πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα ('they are bound once more into a body'). At 92a1 Socrates explains how the theory of recollection entails the view that the soul must have existed somewhere else 'before it was bound in the body' (πρὶν ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδεθῆναι). So the union of soul and body at the birth of a human being is presented as the physical binding of the soul in or into the body, and the soul in its human life is spoken of as 'bound', 'tied' or 'fastened' in the body: διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι (82e2); δεδέσθαι (83a1) and καταδεῖται . . . ὑπὸ σώματος (83d1).

The metaphor of binding suggests that the soul is fastened to the body in the manner of an inanimate object. In the *Phaedo* this is developed into a picture of the soul as a human prisoner only when Socrates speaks, in more highly charged terms, of philosophy as the liberator of soul. The metaphor of the imprisoned soul will be examined in the next section as part of my discussion on how the body affects the soul in life. For the current theme of birth and death, let it simply be observed that Plato adopted the idea of the incarceration of the soul from earlier Orphic thinkers. In the *Cratylus* Socrates discusses the origins of the word σῶμα and tells how the Orphic poets

probably invented it in line with their belief that in life the body acts as the soul's prison-house, keeping it safe (σῶμα, σώζεται) until the penalty is paid (400c5-9):

δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἄμφι Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὥς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σφάζεται, δεσμοτερίου εἰκόνα· εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ 'σῶμα'.

Probably the Orphic poets were the inventors of the name, and they were under the impression that the soul is suffering the punishment of sin, and that the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated, kept safe, as the name 'σῶμα' implies, until the penalty is paid (tr. Jowett).

With regard to the processes of birth and death, Plato does not develop this idea of the soul's imprisonment and there are no pictures of how soul is first 'chained' or 'shackled' to the body. Instead, when he considers the birth processes, Plato chooses to work with the much less emotive metaphor of the binding and connecting of physical objects. This more neutral idea of connection is nevertheless used to great effect in the *Timaeus* where it helps to explain how soul is joined to the body and how it is able to leave at death.

In the *Timaeus* the metaphor of bonds fits very well with the dominant metaphor of the whole dialogue — that of the creation of the universe as the work of craftsman gods. Among their various labours as they fashion the universe, the Demiurge and lesser gods work at binding the different parts of the soul into the human body: ἐνέδουν (43a5); ἐνδεθῆ (44b1); ἐνέδουν (69e3-4); κατέδησαν (70e3-4); κατέδει (73c-4). The soul is described as bound specifically to the marrow and the bonds that hold it are referred to as 'the bonds of life' (73b3-4):

οἱ γὰρ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί, τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ σώματι συνδουμένης, ἐν τούτῳ διαδόμενοι.

for the bonds of life, so long as the soul is bound up with the body, were made fast in it (tr. Cornford).

The metaphor of the binding of soul in the marrow is further developed at 73d as Plato introduces the idea of anchors. Speaking of the primary triangles which make up the marrow, Timaeus explains the Demiurge's methods of linking the soul to the body (73d5-7):

καὶ καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν βαλλόμενος ἐκ τούτων πάσης ψυχῆς δεσμοὺς περὶ τοῦτο σύμπαν ἤδη τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἀπηργάζετο.

From these, as if from anchors, he put forth bonds to fasten all the soul; and now began to fashion our whole body round this thing (tr. Cornford).

So the triangles of the marrow become the anchors around which the bonds of the soul are tied so as to secure the soul to the body. The δεσμοί, then, are fastenings which are tied at one end to the soul and at the other to the marrow. The simile καθάπερ ἐξ

ἀγκυρῶν suggests that the soul is attached to the body like a ship at anchor, an idea which is made explicit at 85e. The relationship between the triangles of the marrow and the fastenings of the soul is portrayed in further detail at 81b-d, as Timaeus explains how the bonds of the soul come to be undone.

At 81b Timaeus tells how the triangles of the marrow are themselves linked together and how, when a creature is young, the links between the triangles are firm and strong (81b7-8): ἰσχυράν μὲν τὴν σύγκλεισιν αὐτῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλα κέκτηται ('their joints are firmly locked together', tr. Cornford). This firm arrangement of triangles allows eating and drinking to take place, since these processes are portrayed in terms of the triangles of the marrow 'cutting up' (τέμνουσα, 81c5), 'overpowering' (ἐπικρατεῖ, 81c5) and so absorbing the triangles of the food and drink that enter the body. This contact between the body and food is presented as a struggle when at 81c7-d1 such contacts are referred to as 'the fighting of contests' (τὸ . . . ἀγῶνας . . . ἡγωνίσθαι). Here Timaeus tells how the 'root' of the triangles (i.e. that which links them together) 'slackens' or 'loosens' (χαλᾷ, 81c7) as a result of the many conflicts fought over a lifetime. Once the inner arrangement begins to loosen, the triangles are easily divided (διαίρεται, 81d3) by the matter entering from outside. Timaeus explains that in this way every creature is 'overcome' and that this experience is called 'old age' (γῆρας). Therefore over time the links between the triangles of the marrow slacken and this has a significant effect on their efficiency as the 'anchors' of the bonds of the soul. The natural conclusion of this process of slackening and loosening follows at 81d4-e1:

τέλος δέ, ἐπειδὴ τῶν περὶ τὸν μυελὸν τριγώνων οἱ συναρμοσθέντες μηκέτι ἀντέχωσιν δεσμοὶ τῇ πόσῃ διιστάμενοι, μεθίσιν τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῶν δεσμούς, ἡ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο·

And at last, when the conjoined bonds of the triangles in the marrow no longer hold out under the stress, but part asunder, they let go in their turn the bonds of the soul; and she, when thus set free in the course of nature, finds pleasure in taking wing to fly away (tr. Cornford).

Thus in the course of life the bonds fastening together the triangles of the marrow gradually wear out and, once the triangles separate, this action releases the bonds by which the gods first fastened soul to body. The soul once 'bound' is now 'loosened' or 'released' (λυθεῖσα). In this way the presentation of death as the λύσις of the soul (*Phaedo*) is shown to be grounded in a series of physical processes. Plato uses the description of the triangles of the marrow, first tightly bound and then slowly loosening, to give greater detail and precision to his claim that the soul is joined to the body in life and comes apart from it in death. Corporeal and incorporeal nature meet at the point where the physical triangles of matter that make up the marrow serve as 'anchors' (καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν) for the 'bonds' (δεσμούς) that tether soul to body. Thus the metaphors and imagery of bonds allow Plato to develop a terminology that can 'explain' the processes whereby the soul is tied to the body. But this 'explanation'

only holds at the metaphorical level, for once one tries to 'cash in' the metaphor, one is left simply with the ideas that the immaterial soul is *somehow* attached to corporeal matter and that the way it is attached is *in some respects* like the way one object is tied to another by means of an anchor and rope. The explanation cannot be probed any further than this. For if one asks: 'what part of the soul's nature allows this attachment to be made?', or 'how exactly can the incorporeal be fastened to the corporeal?', there is no answer in literal or abstract terms.

The metaphor of the soul's bonds is further used by Plato at *Timaeus* 85e to explain how some illnesses can cause death. Here Timaeus tells how excessive bile in the body can penetrate to the marrow and thus (85e6-7):

κάουσα ἔλυσεν τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτόθεν οἷον νεῶς πείσματα μεθήκεν τε ἔλευθέραν.

in consuming it unlooses the soul from her moorings there as a ship and sets her free (tr. Cornford, adapted).

In this phrase the soul is explicitly likened by means of a simile to a ship (οἷον νεῶς). The simile is introduced as a further illustration of the idea already present in the verb ἔλυσεν, which has τὰ πείσματα as its direct object. Timaeus tells how the bile 'loosens the cables of the soul' and then adds 'like a ship' to clarify his point. So the simile is there to support the metaphor of the soul's 'cables'. Thus the simile of anchors at 73d5 is completed by the new simile of the ship, and the idea is amplified that the soul is fastened to the body just as a ship is anchored to land. Further, the 'bonds' (δεσμούς) of the soul are now characterised more graphically as 'cables' or 'ropes'. The phrase μεθήκεν . . . ἔλευθέραν provides an interesting twist to the imagery already in place. The verb μεθίημι can mean 'set loose, let go' when used of an object and 'release, set free' when used of a person. At first sight the verb here refers directly to the πείσματα and so the expected translation is 'let go', but the next word, ἔλευθέραν, forces a shift. This adjective is feminine in form and so refers to the soul. Since its meaning ('free') cannot appropriately apply to a ship, the adjective forces a change of perspective so that the soul is once again regarded as a person and the verb is best translated as 'set free'. Thus μεθήκεν functions as a glide term between the idea of the soul as a ship at anchor and as a person imprisoned in the body. By introducing the notion of 'freedom', which clashes with the ship image, Plato evokes, with one deft touch, the complex of ideas whereby the soul is a prisoner in the body during life. By this synthesis Plato brings into play the moral dimension of the imprisonment image and so achieves a harmony of his biological and moral views on the departure of the soul.

A final application of the metaphor of the soul's bonds occurs as Plato focuses on the actual moment of birth and gives a wonderfully detailed portrayal of what goes on in the soul at this crucial transition. At 35a-37a Timaeus explains how the Demiurge creates the soul. The Demiurge fashions for the soul a mathematically proportioned structure, which gives rise to the existence of 'intervals' (διαστάσεων, 36a6) and

'connecting terms' (δεσμῶν, 36a7).²⁷¹ This idea of inner connections and links is then taken up later at 43d6-e2, as Timaeus tells how these links are violently affected when the gods set the soul inside the human body. In order to clarify the meaning of the relevant passage, it must be added that in the intervening section Timaeus has also developed the view that the soul's nature is composed of certain 'circles': first, the two main circles of the Same and of the Different (formed from the original soul mixture (36c), and second, the seven unequal circles fashioned from the circle of the Different (36d2).²⁷² So, drawing on these ideas that the inner nature of the soul is composed of circles and contains various inner links, Timaeus describes the moment of its birth in a human frame (43a ff.). The human body is itself in a permanent state of flux (43a) and into this the gods 'bound the moving courses' of the soul (τὰς τῆς ἀθανάτου ψυχῆς περιόδους ἐνέδουν εἰς . . . σῶμα, 43a4-5). The introduction of the soul bestows movement on the body but this movement is initially irregular due to the huge upheaval that the soul experiences on its first contact with corporeal matter. The soul is not used either to the great buffeting that it suffers from the 'floods' of the body it occupies (πολλοῦ γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ κατακλύζοντος καὶ ἀπορρέοντος κύματος, 43b) or to the impact of outside bodies (43b-c). Thus these 'sensations' produced a disastrous effect on the soul (43c7-d2):

καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε ἐν τῷ παρόντι πλείστην καὶ μεγίστην παρεχόμεναι κίνησιν, μετὰ τοῦ ῥέοντος ἐνδελεχῶς ὀχετοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ σφοδρῶς σείουσιν τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδους,

And so at the moment we speak of, causing for the time being a strong and widespread commotion and joining with that perpetually streaming current in stirring and violently shaking the circuits of the soul, (tr. Cornford).

This upheaval also wreaks damage on the inner bonds of the soul (43d2-e2):

τὴν μὲν ταῦτοῦ παντάπασιν ἐπέδησαν ἐναντία αὐτῇ ῥέουσιν καὶ ἐπέσχον ἄρχουσιν καὶ ἰοῦσαν, τὴν δ' αὖ θατέρου διέσεισαν, ὥστε τὰς τοῦ διπλασίου καὶ τριπλασίου τρεῖς ἑκατέρας ἀποστάσεις καὶ τὰς . . . μεσότητος καὶ συνδέσεις, ἐπειδὴ παντελῶς λυταί οὐκ ἦσαν πλὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ συνδήσαντος, πάσας μὲν στρέψαι στροφάς, πάσας δὲ κλάσεις καὶ διαφθοράς τῶν κύκλων ἐμποιεῖν.

they completely hampered the revolution of the Same by flowing counter to it and stopped it from going on its way and governing; and they dislocated the revolution of the Different. Accordingly, the intervals of the double and the

²⁷¹ The same blend of mathematical and physical proportions can be seen at 37a4, where soul is said to have been 'in due proportion divided and bound together' (tr. Cornford) — ἀνὰ λόγον μερισθεῖσα καὶ συνδεθεῖσα.

²⁷² For an excellent discussion on the status and significance of these soul circles, see Sedley, "Becoming like god" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle'. Sedley argues (pp. 328-30) that Plato's notion of soul circles or circuits is not simply metaphorical but 'is meant as physical fact too' (p. 329).

triple, three of each sort, and the connecting means of the ratios . . . , since they could not be completely dissolved save by him who bound them together, were twisted by them in all manner of ways, and all possible infractions and deformations of the circles were caused (tr. Cornford).

Thus the inner bonds (συνδέσεις) of the soul are severely strained and twisted as a result of soul's entry into a body. But still this violent effect is not enough actually to break or undo the bonds, which can only be undone by the Demiurge himself. Although it is not stated explicitly, the continued existence of the soul must depend upon these bonds remaining fast, and here it is confirmed that nothing else other than the creator can untie them. Thus one of the essential differences between body and soul is highlighted: for whereas the bonds of the body (in the triangles of the marrow) are loosened by old age or illness which leads to death, the bonds of the soul can only be loosened by the creator himself. So while it is natural for the body to die after a certain time, the soul will live forever, unless the Demiurge wills otherwise. This point accords with the Demiurge's own proclamation at 41a7: δι' ἐμοῦ γε γινόμενα ἄλυτα ἐμοῦ γε μὴ ἐθέλοντος ('those [creations] which are my own handiwork are indissoluble, save with my consent', tr. Cornford)²⁷³ and recalls a passage in the *Phaedo* (80b9-10), where the soul is agreed to be 'quite or very nearly indissoluble' (τὸ παράπαν ἀδιαλύτω . . . ἢ ἐγγύς τι τούτου).

In conclusion, the complex of metaphors and images presenting different types of bonds, links and connections offers accounts of:

- (1) how the soul is attached to the body at birth;
- (2) how the life of the body depends on the presence of soul;

and

- (3) why the body is subject to death in the natural course of events while the soul is not.

This completes my analysis of the four sets of images which portray how the soul is introduced into the human body at birth and how it leaves it upon death. In this section I have focused only on the points of union and separation between body and soul, as this provides a useful starting point for tracking Plato's general use of metaphor for the soul. Some of these metaphors and images for the soul recur in other contexts where Plato uses them for quite different ends. In the next section, with the theme of how body affects soul and how soul responds, it will be shown how two of these metaphors for life and death (union/departure and bonds) are transferred into the soul's experience during human life itself. And to these will be added a third — that of corruption and purification — as Plato (in the *Phaedo*) intensifies his negative presentation of body.

²⁷³ Price comments on the souls in this passage (*MC*, p. 82): 'not essentially immortal, and yet fit for immortality, they have been well put together in a good state, unlike the imperfectly compounded and perishing souls of *Republic* Book 10 (611b5-6)'.

III. Human Life

There are two fundamental points to bear in mind in interpreting Plato's portrayal of the relations between soul and body: the two entities are of wholly different natures and there is no equality of status between the two. Soul is the undisputed superior of the body, a point on which much of Plato's philosophy depends. In the *Phaedo* Socrates contrasts the natures of soul and body and at 80b1-5 draws the conclusion that:

τῷ μὲν θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ αἰὲν ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχῇ, τῷ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῳ καὶ θνητῷ καὶ ἀνοήτῳ καὶ πολυειδεῖ καὶ διαλυτῷ καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸ εἶναι σῶμα.

Soul is most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, unvarying, and constant in relation to itself; whereas body, in its turn, is most similar to what is human, mortal, multiform, non-intelligible, dissoluble, and never constant in relation to itself (tr. Gallop).

From its close relation to what is immortal and changeless the soul is regarded as like the divine and as inhabiting the same realm as the gods when in its perfect state.²⁷⁴ It follows, then, that the soul is superior and more honourable than the body, which shares in all the imperfections and unstable qualities of the corporeal world. The view of soul as superior to body is expressed in various passages (see e.g. *Timaeus* 34c and *Laws* 731c, 959a) and the soul's excellence is linked with its seniority (*Timaeus* 34b-35a and *Laws* 896b and 967c). Plato expresses the superiority of soul over body in metaphors of power: the soul becomes the master/mistress and ruler, while the body becomes its slave or subject. The point is made succinctly at *Phaedo* 79e8-80a2:

ἐπειδὴν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὧσι ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, τῷ μὲν δουλεύειν καὶ ἄρχεσθαι ἢ φύσις προστάττει, τῇ δὲ ἄρχειν καὶ δεσπόζειν·

when soul and body are present in the same thing, nature ordains that the one shall serve and be ruled, whereas the other shall rule and be master (tr. Gallop).

The same point is made at *Timaeus* 34b-35a, where soul is older and more venerable than body (καὶ γενέσκει καὶ ἀρετῇ προτέραν καὶ πρεσβυτέραν) and is made by God to be body's 'mistress and governor' (δεσπότιν καὶ ἀρξουσάν), and at *Laws* 896b-c, where it is said that soul is prior to matter and that σῶμα δὲ δεύτερόν τε καὶ ὕστερον, ψυχῆς ἀρχούσης, ἀρχόμενον κατὰ φύσιν ('matter came later and takes second place. Soul is the master, and matter its natural subject', tr. Saunders).

There is, then, for Plato a 'natural' dominance (ἢ φύσις προστάττει, *Phaedo*, and κατὰ φύσιν, *Laws*) of soul over body. Now while this might suggest that in human life the soul exercises an effortless control over the body and all its affairs, this is not

²⁷⁴ *Phd.* 79d, 80d, 81a; *Rep.* 611c; *Phdr.* 246e, 248a, 248c, 249c.

Plato's view. For although the soul is indisputably superior and is responsible for life, movement and rationality, still the body and its concerns challenge the rule of the soul and at times apparently even threaten the very nature of soul. The metaphor of the soul's loss of wings illustrates how union with the body is a consequence, and indeed manifestation, of the soul's loss of perfection and separation from the divine realm (*Phaedrus* 246c, 248c-d). But once the soul is united with the body, further problems are in store for it, as the passage at *Timaeus* 43d-e makes abundantly clear. In the next section I shall examine three groups of metaphors which explore the effects of body on soul during human life and which contribute to Plato's constant theme of the benefits of philosophy.

1. Union and Separation

For Plato the soul is, amongst other functions, the immortal principle of life and the rational element in human beings — the means by which we reason, think and know. Reasoning is a natural activity of the soul and one best achieved when the soul is unhindered by the body. In Plato's view earthly life is detrimental to this proper functioning of the soul because the body, with its attendant needs and desires, is an impediment to pure thought. When the soul in its natural state reasons, it does so with reference to the eternal immutable Forms, the only entities which can be truly known. At *Republic* 476e-480a Plato argues that all knowledge must be knowledge of the Forms and at 508e3 designates the Form of the Good as the 'cause of knowledge' (αἰτία . . . ἐπιστήμης). Thus Plato sets up a very close relationship between that which knows (soul) and that which can be known (Forms).²⁷⁵ Soul in its natural state is soul in its perfect state for Plato, and when perfect soul is able fully to contemplate the Forms, this contemplation in turn fosters or reinforces the soul's excellence (*Phaedrus* 247d). But when soul loses the ability to discern true reality, its perfect state is marred (*Phaedrus* 248c-d). As a result soul enters a body and so life in the body is presented as a separation of soul from its natural or perfect state and from contact with the Forms (*Phaedo* 80c). On being joined with body soul passes from the invisible, changeless world into the corporeal realm where everything is in flux and therefore where nothing can be known. Without contact with the Forms, the soul cannot have knowledge and so cannot reason properly, for it has lost its standard of what is real or true. Further, the soul's powers of reasoning are impaired by the body itself, since the senses of sight, hearing and touching *etc.*, rooted as they are in physical nature, convey only inaccurate information to the soul (*Phaedo* 65b).²⁷⁶ A third impediment in human life to the

²⁷⁵ *Rep.* 611e. Standard literature on the subject of knowledge and the Forms includes: W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*; R.E. Allen (ed.), *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*; Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*; N.P. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*; and Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, (see esp. ch. 8, 'Belief, knowledge and understanding', and ch. 9, 'The "theory" of Forms').

²⁷⁶ On Plato's views on knowledge and sense-perception, see Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*; N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*; W. Bondeson, 'Perception, true

soul's activity of reasoning comes from the situation where both physical pleasures (eating, drinking, sex *etc.*) and diseases distract the soul from pure thought (*Phaedo* 66a, 66b-c). Thus Plato suggests strong reasons why the body has a detrimental effect on the soul and its rational activity.

To counteract these negative effects of the body, soul has only one recourse: to resist the body's influence by becoming as independent as possible. This process is represented in the *Phaedo* as the separation of soul from body. In this dialogue Socrates develops the view that it is only in the course of reasoning and reflection (ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι, 65c2) that the soul is able to attain knowledge of reality (65b-c) and that the soul can best reflect when it becomes independent of the body (65c5-10):

Λογίζεται δέ γέ που τότε κάλλιστα, ὅταν αὐτὴν τούτων μηδὲν παραλυσῇ, μήτε ἀκοή μήτε ὄψις μήτε ἀλγηδὼν μηδὲ τις ἡδονή, ἀλλ' ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν γίγνηται ἐῷσα χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ καθ' ὅσον δύναται μὴ κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ μὴδ' ἀπτομένη ὀρέγεται τοῦ ὄντος.

Ἔστι ταῦτα.

And [soul] reasons best, presumably, whenever none of these things bothers it, neither hearing nor sight nor pain, nor any pleasure either, but whenever it comes to be alone by itself as far as possible, disregarding the body, and whenever, having the least possible communion and contact with it, it strives for reality.

That is so (tr. Gallop).

Since this independent reflection of the soul is characterised as philosophical contemplation, the practice of philosophy is identified as the detachment of soul from the influence and concerns of the body. Kenneth Dorter rightly points out that such philosophical 'detachment' 'comes about by means of our perceiving the permanent within the transitory' (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 28). The idea of the soul 'disregarding' (ἐῷσα χαίρειν)²⁷⁷ the body is developed into a picture of physical separation, as the soul 'avoids association with the body' (μὴ κοινωνοῦσα, 65c8; οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα, 80e) and even 'flees away' from it (φεύγει ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, 65d1; φεύγουσα, 80e4), and as philosophy becomes the act of 'separating' soul from body (τὸ χωρίζειν . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν (67c6-7). In contrast, when the soul is affected by physical con-

opinion and knowledge in Plato's *Theaetetus*'; J.M. Cooper, 'Plato on sense-perception and knowledge (*Theaetetus* 184-186)'; G. Fine, 'Knowledge and belief in *Republic* V' and 'Knowledge and belief in *Republic* VI-VII'; and J.T. Bedu-Addo, 'Sense-experience and the argument for recollection in Plato's *Phaedo*. On the Parmenidean background to Plato, see Cornford, 'Parmenides' two ways' and *Plato and Parmenides*; Vlastos, 'Parmenides' theory of knowledge'; Kahn, 'The thesis of Parmenides'; and Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*.

²⁷⁷ The personification of soul effected by the anthropomorphism of such terms as ἐῷσα χαίρειν and παραλυσῇ is at work throughout the *Phdo.* and is accentuated in passages such as 79c7-8 where the body causes the soul to 'wander' (πλανᾶται) and become 'confused (ταράττεται) and dizzy (εἰλιγγιᾶ) as if drunk (ὥσπερ μεθύουσα)'.

cerns, this is 'association' with the body (συνουσία, 81b; ὁμιλία τε καὶ συνουσία, 81c5). Plato also introduces into this picture of union and separation metaphors of emotional closeness and distance, so that when soul 'associates' with body, it no longer 'despises' the body (ἀτιμάζει, 65d1) but at these times 'has served and loved it and been bewitched by it' (θεραπεύουσα καὶ ἐρώσα καὶ γοητευομένη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, 81b2-3).²⁷⁸ The physical separation metaphor is continued at 79c-d as the soul that contemplates without the body is said to 'pass' (οἶχεται, d1) into the immortal realm, whereas the soul that relies on sense-perception is described as 'dragged by the body' (ἔλκεται ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος, c6) into the phenomenal world.

The idea of philosophical contemplation effecting a separation of soul and body is further developed in the *Phaedo* through the metaphors of purification and imprisonment, both of which offer compelling reasons why the soul should be removed from the influence of the body.

2. Corruption and Purification

The image of corruption and purification is introduced with the striking idea that through association with the body soul is 'mixed together' (συμπεφυρμένη, 66b5) with evil. The body is presented as an evil substance which can infect the person. If human beings become infected with body (ἀναπιμπλώμεθα, 67a5), they ought to try to purify themselves from it (καθαρεύομεν, 67a5). At 67c5 purification (κάθαρσις) is said to consist in separating the soul as far as possible from the body, and at 67d9 this process is identified as the practice of philosophy.²⁷⁹ Philosophy purifies the soul of the taint of the body, and at 80e-81c Socrates tells of the afterlife experiences of both the 'purified' and 'tainted' souls.

²⁷⁸ On Plato's presentation of soul's attachment to body in the *Phdo.*, see Price, *MC*, p. 38: 'The bad soul loves the body (81b3, cf. 83d6) . . . , it falls for it like a man for his mistress, so that, after death, it remains "in a state of desire for the body" and still hovers around it (108a7-b1)'.

²⁷⁹ Plato adopted the idea of purification from earlier religious beliefs and shaped it to his own views, as Rohde explains (p. 471): 'Plato often speaks of the κάθαρσις, the purification, after which man must strive . . . He takes both the words and the idea from the theologians, but he gives it a higher meaning, while yet preserving unmistakeably the analogy with the κάθαρσις of the *theologi* and mystery-priests. It is no longer the pollution from the δαίμονες that is to be avoided, but rather the dulling of the power of knowledge . . . due to the world of the senses. Man's effort must be directed not so much to ritual purity, as to the preservation of his knowledge of the eternal from eclipse through the deceptive illusions of the senses; its withdrawal from contact with the ephemeral as the source of pollution and debasement. Thus even in this philosophical reinterpretation of ritual abstinence in terms of spiritual release and emancipation, the effort after "purity" retains its religious sense. The world of the Ideas, the world of pure Being, to which only the pure soul can attain, is a world of divinity.' On the significance of purification in Plato, see also Robinson, *Plato's Psychology* (p. 24), and Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo* (pp. 14, 32, 64-9, 79-82, 173-5 and 177-8). On purification in early Greek religion, see R. Parker, *Miasma*. For Parker's comments on purification in Plato, see ch. 10 'Purity and salvation' (esp. pp. 281-3).

If a soul is 'pure' (καθαρά, 80e2) and not 'dragging along' (συνεφέλκουσα) anything of the body, it departs (ἀπέρχεται, 81a5) to the invisible and immortal realm. But if at the time of death a soul is 'tainted and impure' (μεμιασμένη καὶ ἀκάθαρτος, 81b1), its fate is very different. Such an impure soul is one that has not been purified by philosophy. This is a soul that has maintained constant association with the body and so now is διεκλημένην . . . ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς (81c4, ('interspersed with a corporeal element', tr. Gallop).²⁸⁰ The corporeal is described as 'ponderous, heavy, earthy and seen' (ἐμβριθές, βαρὺ, γεῶδες, ὁρατόν, 81c8-9) and so the soul that is interspersed with such a nature is markedly different from soul in its natural state, which is divine and invisible (see 79b, 80a). Contamination by the body is a very serious threat to the soul's existence as soul and prevents it from departing to its natural 'home' in the invisible realm (81c9-d1):

ὃ δὴ καὶ ἔχουσα ἡ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεται²⁸¹ τε καὶ ἔλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον φόβῳ τοῦ αἰδοῦς τε καὶ "Αἰδου, ὥσπερ λέγεται, περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη²⁸²

and thus encumbered, such a soul is weighed down, and dragged back into the region of the seen, through fear of the invisible and of Hades; and it roams among tombs and graves, so it is said (tr. Gallop).

Such an impure soul is forced to wander about these places as a punishment until it is once more attached to a body, which will infect it with still further impurity. Thus the impure soul becomes lost in the cycle of rebirths and the only escape is to turn to philosophy with her offer of 'liberation and purification' (λύσει τε καὶ καθαμῶ, 82d6).

Plato's idea that contact with the body taints and infects the soul is found in many passages throughout the dialogues (see appendix 2) and offers a strikingly negative picture of the soul/body relationship. However, on occasion this idea of corruption is developed in further malign detail, which gives rise to other graphic metaphors of degeneration and decay. One of the most memorable visions of the impure soul is that given at *Republic* 611c-612a. Here Socrates tells how it is impossible to discern the true nature of soul while it is joined with the body, and describes the soul as 'maimed'

²⁸⁰ This idea is echoed at 83d10 with the description of the soul as 'full of' or 'saturated with' the body: τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα. Dorter rightly observes (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 80) that this 'corporeal stain' is an image of the 'fear of the invisible'.

²⁸¹ At 81c8-9 corporeal nature is described as 'ponderous' (ἐμβριθές) and 'heavy' (βαρὺ) and thus its contamination of soul results in the soul being 'weighed down' (ψυχὴ βαρύνεται) at c19. The idea that moral failing causes the soul to be weighed down, and that life in the body reinforces this weight, is also used at *Phdr.* 248c7-8 (see discussion above, 5.II.2 *Wings*) and at *Rep.* 519b1 where the soul is said to have 'leaden weights' (τὰς μολυβδίδας) attached to it as a result of birth and life in the body — weights which are the result of the desires, occasioned by the body, for 'food, pleasures and gluttonies' (ἐδωδαῖς, ἡδοναῖς, λιχνείαις).

²⁸² The soul that is contaminated by the body suffers the experience of 'rolling'. For my discussion of rolling as a form of disorderly motion indicating irrationality, see 'Plato's moving *logos*'. See also note 254 above on rolling in *Phdr.*

or 'mutilated' (λελωβημένον) by its association with the body. He tells how the 'pure' (καθαρόν) soul is far more beautiful than the impure and likens the soul in its bodily frame to the sea-god Glaucus, whose original appearance is spoiled by his life in the sea. The limbs of this god are 'broken off' (ἐκκεκλάσθαι), 'crushed' (συντετριφθαι) and 'altogether maimed' (πάντως λελωβῆσθαι) by the waves, and his appearance is further distorted by the shells and seaweed that have attached themselves to him, to the extent that he now looks more like a 'monster' (θηρίω). The sea image is continued as Socrates asks Glaucón to imagine how the soul might be, if it could orient itself towards the divine and so be raised up 'from the sea' (ἐκ τοῦ πόντου). In this passage Plato packs together metaphors of height/depth, movement, nourishment, communion/separation with those of corruption/purification to express more vividly the impact of philosophy on the soul:

καὶ ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται καὶ οἷων ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, ὥς συγγενῆς οὖσα τῷ τε θεῷ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ αἰεὶ ὄντι, καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιοῦτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὀρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἐστιωμένη,²⁸³ γεγῆρα καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἐστιάσεων.

... and [we should] consider what it is related to and the affiliations it desires, given that it is of the same order as the divine, immortal, and eternal realm. And we should consider what would happen to the mind if the *whole* of it allowed this realm to dictate its direction, and if this impulse carried it out of its current underwater location, and all the stones and shells were broken off — all the accretions of earth and rock (since earth is its food) which currently grow uncontrollably in large numbers all over it because it indulges in pleasures which men say bring happiness (tr. Waterfield).

This remarkable passage presents, among other images, a picture of the soul as spoiled and disfigured by its life in the body. Like Glaucus the soul is encrusted and covered in accretions as a result of its environment, and only philosophy, which fosters close association with the divine, has the power to restore it to its former pristine condition.

3. Imprisonment and Release

Plato offers a further account of the harmful effects of body on soul through the metaphor of imprisonment whereby the soul is a prisoner, chained in the body and so separated from the outside world. In the *Phaedo* the image of imprisonment is closely related to the more neutral idea of the binding of soul in (or to) the body, and often it

²⁸³ The idea that the soul 'consumes' certain kinds of 'food' is used in various passages in the dialogues, see appendix 2. The metaphor of the soul's food is perhaps linked with the metaphor of the purification of the soul through the idea of purification as a purging of unwanted, waste substances, see *Soph.* 227c-230c.

is impossible to discriminate between the type of binding that is being suggested — the binding of a physical object or the shackling of a person. This ambiguity can be seen, for example, at 67d1 where purification is said to separate the soul from the body so that it is ἐκλυομένην ὥσπερ [ἐκ] δεσμών ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ('freed as it were from the bonds of the body').²⁸⁴ It is only at 82e-83d that the metaphor of binding refers unequivocally to a person and even here it is used alongside metaphors for the attachment of physical objects.

At 82d9-e5 Socrates begins to explain how philosophy frees the soul from the influence of the body:

γινώσκουσι γάρ, ἡ δ' ὅς, οἱ φιλομαθεῖς ὅτι παραλαβοῦσα αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἡ φιλοσοφία ἀτεχνῶς διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ προσκεκολλημένην, ἀναγκαζομένην δὲ ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ διὰ τούτου σκοπεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην.

Lovers of knowledge recognize that when philosophy takes their soul in hand, it has been veritably bound and glued to the body, and is forced to view things as if through a prison, rather than alone by itself; and that it is wallowing in utter ignorance (tr. Gallop).

The metaphor of bonds is first introduced here with the participle διαδεδεμένην (bound on either side, bound fast). The verb διαδέω can refer both to the binding of objects and the chaining of prisoners and so at this stage the actual nature of the soul's bondage is still ambiguous. However, with the participle προσκεκολλημένην ('glued on or to') the image shifts squarely into that of an inanimate object.²⁸⁵ It is only with the simile ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ ('as if through a prison') that the soul is unambiguously presented as a human prisoner. The idea that the soul is 'glued' to the body is unusual and prepares the way for the equally surprising metaphors of 'pinning' and 'riveting' at 83d (to be discussed below). These three metaphors clash with the idea of a personified soul and indeed seem designed to do so. The dominant image of the soul in the *Phaedo* is that of an inner person, and for an audience accustomed to this image the idea of the soul being 'glued' or 'nailed' to the body is disconcerting. Since Plato has made it clear that the soul is the natural master of the body (*Phaedo* 80a), the body's influence on soul is, for him, contrary to the natural order. These inanimate metaphors, which present the soul/body union in terms of carpentry, thus throw into

²⁸⁴ See also 65a1 (ἀπολύων), 67d4 and 67d9 (λύσις) where the general notion of 'release' could refer to an object or a person.

²⁸⁵ Tredennick interprets both διαδεδεμένην and προσκεκολλημένην as referring to a person and translates: 'Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner chained hand and foot in the body'. While διαδεδεμένην could refer to a person, the same is not true of προσκεκολλημένην. Thus Tredennick's translation of προσκεκολλημένην as 'chained hand and foot' is not acceptable and obscures Plato's calculated shifts in this passage between inanimate and animate imagery.

relief the unnaturalness of the situation where the body influences the soul and so convey Plato's horror at the soul's plight.

But after introducing the image of soul as an inanimate object glued to the body, why does Plato then switch again to a personified soul in the simile of imprisonment (ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ)? The answer is that, apart from the rhetorical capital to be gained from the human prisoner idea, he is about to speak of the soul as 'inquiring' (σκοπεῖσθαι), which sits rather uneasily with the depiction of soul as a piece of wood (or whatever) stuck to the body in some act of demiurgic creation. But in addition to the necessity of personification and the rhetorical impact, the image of the soul as a prisoner allows Plato to express other aspects of the soul/body union. The imprisonment image presents the soul as separate from reality and forced to view the Forms not directly but through the body, its prison. Thus the soul becomes a person shut away from the real world and only able to see it by looking out through the prison windows or bars. However, Plato does not actually mention windows or bars and says only that the soul is forced to view reality 'through a prison' (διὰ εἰργμοῦ). Since one strictly cannot 'view' anything 'through' a prison, this idea is a little odd at the level of the vehicle of the image (the prisoner/prison relationship) but makes sense at the level of the tenor (the soul/body relationship), where the inner soul views and judges the outside world literally *through* the body *via* the senses.²⁸⁶ The complex of metaphors and images here illustrates Plato's view that the body is a hindrance to thought: just as the walls or bars of a prison separate the prisoner from the outside world and impair his view of it, so the body separates the soul from the Forms and impairs its view of true reality. In both these ideas separation has a dual effect, emotional and cognitive: first, like the prisoner, the embodied soul is isolated and cut off from the world that is familiar to it and thus suffers the emotional effect of separation; second, just as the prisoner can only look out at the world beyond through the barrier of the prison, so the embodied soul has its view of the real world obscured by the barrier of the body.

The result of the cognitive effect of separation from the reality of the Forms is that the embodied soul 'is rolled around in utter ignorance' (ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην). There is an intriguing contrast in this passage as the fixed condition of the soul, bound in the body, is at odds with the rolling movement that characterises its epistemological weakness. Plato uses this same contrast in other dialogues²⁸⁷ and his aim would seem to be to create a paradox whereby the same entity is both fixed and moving. The point of this paradox is to stress that the cause of the unsteady movement of the soul is precisely its fixed status, as it is trapped in the body. What

²⁸⁶ On the *Phaedo*'s presentation of perception as a process involving body and soul, see Price, *MC*, pp. 36-8.

²⁸⁷ See e.g. the contrast between the fixity of oral discussion and the unsteadiness of books in *Phdr.* 275c-276a. 'Rolling' in the *Phdr.* passage again signifies epistemological uncertainty. M.M. Mackenzie has discussed Plato's use of κυλινδομαι and has rightly concluded that it refers to (p. 73, n.14) 'the inability of belief about the sensible world to be fixedly true or false' ('Paradox in Plato's *Phaedrus*'). I have discussed the contrast between unsteady motion and fixity in the dialogues in 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

from a 'normal' perspective looks to be a cause of fixity for the soul (embodiment) is from a philosophical perspective a cause of unsteadiness (separation from the Forms which impairs reasoning). In this way the image of the bound/imprisoned soul works like that of the soul's home in that it inverts the ordinary, non-philosophical perspective: when the soul is bound in the body, it is not stable but unsteady; when the soul is living in the body, it is not at home but in exile. This picture of the soul bound to the body and rolling around in ignorance recalls the scene at 81d-e, where the lost soul is 'rolled around' (κυλινδουμένη) in graveyards, waiting to be bound again (ἐνδεθῶσιν) into mortal bodies. At 81d-e the soul is freed from the body but is still not settled. Plato's point here is that the experience of a soul in the afterlife mirrors its experience of life in the body: if a soul associates closely with the body in life, it will not be able to leave it at death. In terms of the image of restless motion and stability, the only way for a soul to achieve stability (emotional and cognitive) is through total separation from the body and full contact with the divine Forms.

The imagery of union and separation works to confirm that in Plato's view although the soul is joined with the body in life, it still has some control over the extent of the union. In other words, it can make choices about how far it will associate with the body and how far it will seek independence from it. The metaphor of bonds and imprisonment is used to support this idea: the initial binding of soul to body occurs through the agency of an external force, but once in the body the soul itself can choose to loosen those bonds as far as it can or to reinforce them. Socrates explains (82e5-83a1):

[ἡ φιλοσοφία] καὶ τοῦ εἰργμοῦ τὴν δεινότητα κατιδοῦσα ὅτι δι' ἐπιθυμίας ἐστίν, ὥς ἂν μάλιστα αὐτὸς ὁ δεδεμένος συλλήπτωρ εἰ τοῦ δεδέσθαι.

Now philosophy discerns the cunning of the prison, sees how it is effected through desire, so that the captive himself may co-operate most of all in his imprisonment (tr. Gallop).

Dorter's interpretation of this passage is clear and helpful (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 80):

This prison represents not merely a confinement in the body (life) . . . but the additional *devotion* to the corporeal at the expense of the spiritual. Our imprisonment is thus a function of our responding to corporeal pleasures and pains, of our nurturing in ourselves corresponding desires and fears, and of our becoming increasingly attached to the visible realm.

In the face of this danger philosophy becomes the agent which tries to loosen the soul rather than allowing it to reinforce its own bonds (83a1-5):

— ὅπερ οὖν λέγω, γινώσκουσιν οἱ φιλομαθεῖς ὅτι οὕτω παραλαβοῦσα ἡ φιλοσοφία ἔχουσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἥρέμα παραμυθεῖται καὶ λύειν ἐπιχειρεῖ, ἐνδεικνυμένη ὅτι ἀπάτης μὲν μεστή διὰ τῶν ὁμμάτων σκέψις, ἀπάτης δὲ ἡ διὰ τῶν ὧτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθήσεων.

As I say, then, lovers of knowledge recognize that their soul is in that state when philosophy takes it in hand, gently reassures it and tries to release it, by showing that inquiry through the eyes is full of deceit, and deceitful too is inquiry through the ears and other senses; (tr. Gallop).

So philosophy tries to 'free' (λύειν) the soul and the means of release is by teaching it that the bodily senses cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of the truth. The soul can achieve freedom during human life by realising that the evidence of the senses cannot be trusted and thus deciding to rely only on itself. The concept of soul operating as an independent entity while in a human body is difficult to conceive of and express. Plato uses the helpful spatial metaphor of separation to convey his point but even with this he must still work hard to communicate his vision (83a6-b2):

πείθουσα δὲ ἐκ τούτων μὲν ἀναχωρεῖν, ὅσον μὴ ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς χρῆσθαι, αὐτὴν δὲ εἰς αὐτὴν συλλέγεσθαι καὶ ἀθροίζεσθαι παρακελευομένη, πιστεύειν δὲ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἢ αὐτὴν αὐτῇ, ὅτι ἂν νοήσῃ αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τῶν ὄντων·

and by persuading it [soul] to withdraw from those, so far as it need not use them, and by urging it to collect and gather itself together, and to trust none other but itself, whenever, alone by itself, it thinks of any reality, alone by itself (tr. Gallop).

The remarkable repetition of pronouns in this passage reveals Plato's effort to convey the highly abstract notion of what it is for the soul to exercise pure reason (independent of the corporeal senses) about pure reality (independent of physical nature). In terms of separation imagery, if the soul is to be free, it must withdraw from the body (ἀναχωρεῖν) and collect itself together, as if in its own space. The wonderfully graphic verbs συλλέγεσθαι (come together, assemble) and ἀθροίζεσθαι (gather, crowd together, rally) suggest that the soul is an entity of different parts which can be dispersed or concentrated. These spatial terms do not refer to a process whereby the soul would literally withdraw from the different areas of the body but a process whereby the soul would cease to use the bodily senses and rely on its own rational faculties alone. In this way the soul would 'concentrate' its power and 'collect' itself, with the spatial terms serving as metaphors for the adoption of a particular mental strategy and focus. In terms of the metaphor of imprisonment and freedom, freedom lies in the soul's choice to adopt this independent strategy and imprisonment in its choice to work in close conjunction with the bodily senses, where 'desire' (ἐπιθυμία) reinforces its bonds (82e6).

The idea that the soul has a role in its own imprisonment or freedom is expressed in a slightly different way at 83d4. Here Socrates explains that the force of physical sensations can cause the soul to believe that the body's experience of reality in the phenomenal world is actually the true one (83d1-5):

Οὐκοῦν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ πάθει μάλιστα καταδεῖται ψυχὴ ὑπὸ σώματος;

5. Soul and Body

I. Introduction

The subject of Chapters 3 and 4 was the nature and significance of Plato's metaphors for the gods. In Chapters 5 and 6 the focus will shift to another invisible and immortal element operating (in Plato's view) in human life: the soul. Although there are occasions when the human soul is represented as a plant, animal, place or inanimate object (see appendix 2), for the most part the soul, like the gods, is portrayed in anthropomorphic terms. These chapters will therefore offer more of Plato's 'images of persons unseen' and will continue to assess their cognitive and rhetorical significance. Discussion about the soul occupies a great deal of space in the dialogues: the interlocutors debate many aspects and experiences of the soul — such as its nature and value, its rational activity and its fate in the afterlife. Because of the wealth of this material I have limited my study to two central concerns: (Chapter 5) metaphors for the relationship of soul and body; and (Chapter 6) metaphors for the inner nature of the soul.

In Chapter 1 (section V) three distinct areas of inquiry relating to the soul were set out: theological speculation on transcendental and religious experience; psychological accounts of rational and emotional behaviour; and sociological and philosophical debates on morality. Plato's ideas on soul can be roughly divided into three areas: first, accounts of the soul's immortality and how it is joined with and separated from the body; second, accounts of how the soul and body relate to each other during the period of human life; and third, the nature of the soul itself. Although these areas necessarily interlink, one can still broadly distinguish their perspectives: first, the soul's immortality and its union with the body raise religious and transcendental questions; and second, the issues of how soul and body relate to each other during life and the nature of the soul itself raise psychological, behavioural and moral questions. The subject of this chapter will be what part metaphors play in Plato's accounts of the relationship between soul and body. This does not explicitly involve issues of morality but does encompass aspects of religious experience and accounts of rational and emotional behaviour.

Towards the end of Chapter 2 I argued that the illustrative thesis and Eva Kittay's version of the epistemic view offer the accounts most likely to explain the cognitive role of Plato's soul metaphors. On the illustrative thesis metaphors provide vivid and memorable ways of saying things that can be said in literal terms. Kittay and other critics, however, reject this view, maintaining that some metaphorical statements simply cannot be 'reduced' or 'translated' into literal terms. The key question for Chapters 5 and 6, then, is whether any of Plato's soul metaphors are irreducible and cognitively irreplaceable. The question can also be framed in the following way: are there in the dialogues theories or ideas about the soul which are *only*, and which *can* only be, expressed in metaphorical terms? As I said in Chapter 2, the answer to this question is by

no means obvious and it is now time to address this matter in detail, beginning with the metaphors used for the relationship between soul and body.

It was argued in Chapter 2 that Plato treats the soul as an aspect of human experience that can be known and understood. Nevertheless, there are certain aspects of the soul that Plato is not fully confident about, and these include issues relevant to the study of soul and body: what exactly happens to the soul after death and how precisely the soul is connected to the body. In the following sections I shall attempt to assess how metaphors are used in these contexts and how they relate to abstract or literal²⁴² statements on the same issues. My study of the soul/body relationship will concentrate on two main areas: first, the immortal nature of the soul as the principle of life (encompassing the experiences of human birth and death); and second, how soul and body relate to each other during human life. Major groups of metaphors for these areas include the journey of the soul, the imprisonment, binding and sowing of the soul in the body, the soul as ruler or master of the body and the corruption and purification of the soul.

II. The Immortal Soul

For Plato soul is the immortal principle of life: soul gives life and movement to the body and on the death of the body continues to live independently. In various dialogues the view is expressed that the soul experiences successive rebirths in mortal bodies.²⁴³ At birth the soul is said to enter the human body and at death to leave it, and these processes are portrayed in a number of different ways: the soul travels from place to place, sometimes living in a human body, at other times journeying on to a new home; the perfect soul is winged and flies freely but sometimes, as a result of imperfection, loses its wings and is imprisoned or bound in a mortal frame; and soul is sown as a seed in the human form which thus becomes the soil in which it grows. In this section I shall examine these images and metaphors in more detail, tracing their development and commenting on the contribution of each group.

1. Journeys and Homes

In the *Phaedo*, as Socrates faces imminent execution, debate centres around the nature of death. At 64c Socrates identifies death as the 'release' or 'departure' (ἀπαλλαγή)

²⁴² The question of what constitutes literal language for soul in Plato will be debated below (section 5.IV).

²⁴³ For discussion of Plato's views on the immortality of soul, see: Rowe, *Plato*, pp. 163-78; Solmsen, 'Plato and the concept of the soul', pp. 358-60 and 365-7; Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo*, pp. 179-91, and 'Plato's image of immortality'; Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 321-5; Robinson, *Plato's Psychology*, pp. 125-31; McGibbon, 'The fall of the soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*'; Hackforth, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*'; Luce, 'Immortality in Plato's *Symposium*: a reply'; Nilsson, 'The immortality of the soul in Greek religion', pp. 13-16 and Rohde, *Psyche*, pp. 463-76.

of the soul from the body. After the death of the individual, the soul will be separate from the body and will exist independently of it (τότε γὰρ αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν ἢ ψυχὴ ἔσται χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος, 66e6-67a1). The idea that the soul exists 'with' the body in life (συνόντος, 68a3) and exists apart from it in the afterlife (χωρίς, 64c, 66e, 76c *etc.*) leads to the notion that at birth the soul 'enters' the body (εἰς ἀνθρώπειον σῶμα ἀφικέσθαι, 77b7) and at death 'goes away from' it to another place. From general terms of motion (εἶμι, ἔρχομαι, οἴχομαι *etc.*) develop various detailed pictures of the soul as a human being undertaking a journey to another world. Plato is influenced by traditional Greek religion with its deeply ingrained idea of the soul's departure to Hades — an idea that goes back to Homer.²⁴⁴ Plato draws on Homeric ideas about the soul throughout the dialogues²⁴⁵ and it is entirely natural for him, following Greek religion, to use anthropomorphic language for the soul. While it is true that this is a standard way of speaking about the soul, nevertheless within this framework there is great scope for Plato to create novel and fresh ideas, as he develops his own unique perspectives.

From the basis of traditional ideas and from his own belief that the soul is with the body in life and separate from it in death, Plato developed the notion of the soul journeying from place to place, moving into the body at birth, leaving it upon its death and travelling on to different places in the afterlife. The image of the soul's journey is developed extensively in the dialogues so that amongst many other metaphors the soul travels in boats (*Phaedo* 113d), is escorted by a guide along the many-forked path to the underworld (*Phaedo* 108a-b), travels in a great company, and encamps in a meadow (*Republic* 614e).²⁴⁶ In the *Phaedrus* Plato defines soul as 'that which moves itself' (245c-246a) and presents the soul as eternally in motion. Movement is a key theme of the *Phaedrus*, as Anne Lebeck²⁴⁷ has discussed, and in the first section of the central myth Plato uses various metaphors for the soul on its travels. Lebeck observes the variety of images (pp. 269-70):

the concept of the soul as a self-moving entity capable of ascent is symbolized by the wing. The soul itself is represented by a winged chariot, the forces within it by a charioteer and pair of horses, its varying states and conflicts . . . by different kinds of motion: an army on the march, a chariot race at the games, the procession of a religious celebration, or wandering from life to life until the movement of the heavens has come full circle.

For Plato soul is a natural traveller, and in different dialogues soul can be seen employing various modes of transport as it undertakes its cosmic journeys.

²⁴⁴ See J. Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul* (pp. 74-88) and M.P. Nilsson, 'The immortality of the soul in Greek religion' (p. 3).

²⁴⁵ See e.g. *Crat.* 403c-e; *Gorg.* 523a-b and *Rep.* 386d-387b.

²⁴⁶ See appendix 2 (Group A) for all references.

²⁴⁷ Anne Lebeck, 'The central myth of Plato's *Phaedrus*'. On the significance of motion in the *Phaedrus* and Plato's philosophy at large, see esp. p. 284.

Closely connected to the image of the soul as a traveller is the metaphor that it has different dwellings: at one time in the body and at another elsewhere. In the *Timaeus* the parts of the soul are 'housed' (κατέφκισαν, 70a3, b2, e2 *etc.*) in the body, and in the *Phaedrus* the soul 'settles' (κατοικισθεῖσα, 246c3) into a body. In the *Apology* (40c8) and *Phaedo* (117c2) death is spoken of as a 'change in habitation' (μετοίκησης), and in these works, when Socrates is speaking in more ordinary, non-philosophical terms, he talks of death as an ἀποδημία, 'a going or being abroad' or 'a going or being away from home' (*Apology* 41a5; *Phaedo* 61e2, 67c1). Thus the soul is presented as at home in the body, and its separation at death becomes a journey to and a stay abroad. This reflects the common fear of death as a journey from the familiar to an unfamiliar world. But Plato turns this idea on its head as he develops the notion of the soul's true home.

The idea that the soul has a home or native dwelling place emerges in the *Phaedo* (79d), as Socrates describes how the soul, when investigating things by itself, passes into the realm of the pure, everlasting, immortal and changeless. The soul is then described as συγγενής — 'of the same kin, descent or family' — as the beings of this realm (79d). Thus the soul, far from being at home in the body, is a close relative of beings native to a very different place.²⁴⁸ In the *Timaeus* the soul is again shown as having an affinity with a world beyond human existence. At 41d the Demiurge creates souls equal in number to the stars and assigns each soul to a star. Before the souls are placed in human form, they are shown the nature of the universe and the laws of destiny (41d-e). Once in human form, if a man²⁴⁹ lives righteously, his soul returns after death to its assigned star (42b3-5):

καὶ ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούς, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἔξει.

And he who should live well for his due span of time should journey back to the habitation of his consort star and there live a happy and congenial life (tr. Cornford).

So the star is portrayed as a 'home' (οἴκησιν) for the soul, and the attainment of life in this home is the reward for virtue in human, male life. In contrast, those souls that live unrighteous lives in their first birth pass at the second birth into the form of a woman (a woman being cast as an inferior being to a man, see 42a). An unrighteous life in this birth would be followed by a further life as an animal (42c) and so, in terms of the journey image, the soul would be condemned to travel through different lives until it won, through virtue, a return to its first and true home in its appointed star. The sexism of this idea is blatant since in these terms no female has a home-star; the welcome return home is gained after a successful male life and so for the soul the female state represents a further separation from home than that of the male. In terms of the return

²⁴⁸ See also *Phdo.* 81a and 84b.

²⁴⁹ Since women rank below men in the order of reincarnations (42b5-c1), direct access to the home star is the prerogative of the male.

journey, the soul of a male is closer to home than the soul of a female. In the passage at 42b the reference to living a βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ('a happy and accustomed life') creates an explicit link between the return home and the attainment of happiness — an idea which gives the metaphor rhetorical force, as Plato sets out the benefits of living virtuously. Such happiness is but one step away for the male and two for the female.

Plato develops, then, the idea that the soul is truly at home when it is separate from the body and that it is happy when it can live in a place with which it has a natural affinity. Thus the body becomes a temporary home which cannot offer the soul the same kind of familiarity or happiness. When viewed in this way, it is the soul's entry into the body that is its ἀποδημία, and death offers a chance to return home. Thus death can be seen as a joyous experience for the soul — a point that is made in the *Timaeus* when it is said that on the death of the body the soul μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο ('with pleasure flies away', 81d7-e1).

Although death is a release of the soul from its temporary home, this does not mean that it automatically returns to its natural home. For it is only the soul of the man who lives righteously that can achieve this (*Timaeus* 42b). The souls of the unrighteous have a very different experience, as is described in the *Phaedo* and in Plato's other myths of judgement. In terms of the journey and home image, all souls are conveyed after the death of the body to new 'habitations' (οικήσεις, *Phaedo* 114d3). Each soul makes its way to an 'appropriate dwelling' (πρέπουσαν οἰκησιν, *Phaedo* 108c3): the righteous to beautiful and pure dwellings where they will be happy (καθαράν οἰκησιν, *Phaedo* 114c1; οικήσεις ἔτι τούτων καλλίους, *Phaedo* 114c4-5; μακάρων νήσους . . . οἰκεῖν ἐν πάσῃ εὐδαιμονίᾳ, *Gorgias* 523b1-2), and the unrighteous to dark and forbidding places such as Tartarus where they will be punished for their vices (*Phaedo* 113e-114b; *Gorgias* 523b).

While the myth of the *Phaedo* presents a contrast between good and evil souls departing to live in places of happiness or terror, an earlier passage draws a different contrast between departing souls. At 81a-e Socrates tells how souls that have practised philosophy depart to the invisible, divine realm, whereas the non-philosophical souls are unable to detach themselves from the visible, corporeal world and so face a very different kind of afterlife journey. The philosophical soul 'departs' (ἀπέρχεται, 81a5) to the unseen world where it will be 'happy' (εὐδαίμονι, 81a6) and will be (81a6-8):

πλάνης καὶ ἀνοίας καὶ φόβων καὶ ἀγρίων ἐρώτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κακῶν
τῶν ἀνθρωπείων ἀπηλλαγμένη.

released from its wandering and folly, its fears and wild lusts, and other ills of the human condition (tr. Gallop).

The noun πλάνη (wandering), occurring in close conjunction with ἀνοία (folly), is probably best understood as connoting error and intellectual confusion — one of the

ills of the human condition. Plato often uses the image of wandering in this way,²⁵⁰ a usage that can be traced back to Parmenides.²⁵¹ However, Plato combines this notion of intellectual wandering with that of wandering on a spiritual journey when he tells of the fate of the non-philosophical souls. These souls have been so involved with the body's concerns during life that at death they cannot detach themselves from the corporeal world. Departed from the body but unable to depart completely from earthly life, the non-philosophical soul 'is rolled around' (κυλινδουμένη 81d)²⁵² in graveyards, still partly visible as a shadowy apparition. Socrates explains why such souls are in this predicament and what will subsequently befall them (81d6-9):

καὶ οὐ τί γε τὰς τῶν ἀγαθῶν αὐτὰς εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τὰς τῶν φαύλων, αἱ περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀναγκάζονται πλανᾶσθαι δίκην τίνουσαι τῆς προτέρας τροφῆς κακῆς οὐσης. καὶ μέχρι γε τούτου πλανῶνται, ἕως ἂν τῇ τοῦ συνεπακολουθοῦντος, τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς, ἐπιθυμία πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα·

and they're likely to be the souls not of the good but of the wicked, that are compelled to wander about such places, paying the penalty for their former nurture, evil as it was. And they wander about until, owing to the desire of the corporeal element attendant upon them, they are once more imprisoned in a body (tr. Gallop).

The non-philosophical souls 'wander' around places that hold dead bodies, signifying their incomplete separation from the human bodies they once inhabited. This is their punishment for wickedness, and this state of separation from, but yearning for, the corporeal will continue until they are reborn in another body. These souls will never escape from the visible realm until they detach themselves from physical concerns and so, until such time, will endure successive rebirths in mortal bodies. This idea of souls condemned to wander between different mortal lives recalls Empedocles' *Purifications* where the sinful are condemned to pass through a series of births and deaths. Empedocles presents this reincarnation in terms of separation from the gods and of 'wandering' (Fragment 115, lines 6 and 13):

τρίς μιν μυρίας ὥρας ἀπὸ μακάρων ἀλάλησθαι,

...

²⁵⁰ See e.g. *Soph.* 230b, 245d; *Phdr.* 263b; *Rep.* 505c; *Hipp. Maj.* 304c; *Hipp. Min.* 372e, 376c; *Alc.* 117a-118b.

²⁵¹ Parmenides, Fr. 6, 4-6: βροτοὶ εἰδότες οὐδὲν/ κλάττονται, δίκραναι· ἀμηχανίη γὰρ ἐν αὐτῶν/ στήθεσιν ἰθύνει πλακτὸν νόον.

²⁵² Compare *Phdr.* 257a2, where this verb is again used of the afterlife experience of the non-virtuous soul, as it is condemned to be 'rolled around and beneath the earth for nine thousand years with no understanding' (ἐννέα χιλιάδας ἐτῶν περὶ γῆν κυλινδουμένην αὐτήν καὶ ὑπὸ γῆς ἄνου). I have discussed the relationship between the motifs of wandering and rolling in Plato and earlier Greek literature in my article 'Plato's moving *logos*'. I argue that these two types of motion are used to signify disturbance and form part of a widespread contrast in Plato whereby orderly motion represents knowledge and rationality and disorderly motion represents ignorance and irrationality.

τῶν καὶ ἐγὼ νῦν εἰμι, φυγὰς θεόθεν καὶ ἀλήτης

he wanders away from the blessed ones for thrice ten thousand seasons,

...

of them I am now one, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer

(tr. McKirahan, p. 235).

Thus Plato adapts Empedocles' ideas to his own view of the effect of philosophy on the afterlife experience of souls. At 81a the philosophical soul departs to the invisible, divine and immortal realm, where, freed from *πλάνης* (wandering, confusion) and other human ills, it will spend the rest of time *μετὰ θεῶν* (with gods). In contrast the non-philosophical soul has no escape from the mortal world and is forced to 'wander' (*πλανᾶσθαι*) as a punishment until it enters another body. The notion of wandering, as an exile, separated from one's home, is charged with emotive power for the Greeks, as is clear from the *Odyssey*. Throughout the epic wandering is associated with hardship, suffering and isolation,²⁵³ and at 15.340 ff. Odysseus proclaims: 'Than wandering (*πλᾱγκτοσύνης*) nothing else is more evil for mortals'. By using the idea of wandering in the depiction of 'lost' souls Plato is drawing on a well-established and evocative image to support his claim that the practice of philosophy has considerable afterlife benefits for the soul. Plato uses the idea of wandering to create a causal link between intellectual confusion in earthly life and spiritual displacement in the afterlife, thus reinforcing his argument that virtue and its rewards are won through knowledge.²⁵⁴ The image of wandering, with the related metaphors of the soul's homes and various journeys, helps Plato to recommend philosophy, since it is only through knowledge and virtue that the soul can depart safely and return to its true home — whether that is understood as its appointed star or as the immortal, invisible realm. In more general terms Plato uses the imagery of journeys to convey the ideas that the soul has a separate existence from the body, that it does not cease to exist along with the body at the point of its death and that human life is but one stage of the soul's experience.

2. Wings

The striking metaphor of the winged soul offers an alternative account of how the soul enters and leaves the human body. This metaphor is used extensively in only one Pla-

²⁵³ On wandering in Homer (and other Greek poetry), see Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind* (pp. 31, 83, 121 and 176) and *Whom Gods Destroy*, ch. 10, 'Madness as "Wandering"' and ch. 11 'Resonances of Wandering'. For notable instances of the motif of wandering in Homer, see *Il.* 10. 91-2 and *Od.* 15.343. Other references in *Od.* include: 1.2, 75; 3.95, 252; 4.325; 6.278; 13.204; 14.43; 15.312; 16.64, 151; 17.511; 20.195; 21.363; and 24. 307. I discuss the use of wandering in Homer, Plato and other Greek writers in 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

²⁵⁴ Lebeck (pp. 285-7) observes the connection between intellectual confusion and the wandering of the disembodied soul in her comments on *Phdr.* 257a1-2 and 263b5-9.

tonic dialogue, the *Phaedrus*, where it appears as part of the central myth.²⁵⁵ At the beginning of this myth, as Socrates starts to tell what the soul is like, he explains how soul and body are first united (246b7-c6):

[ψυχὴ] τελέα μὲν οὖν οὔσα καὶ ἐπτερωμένη μετεωροπορεῖ τε καὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον διοικεῖ, ἡ δὲ πτερορρυήσασα φέρεται ἕως ἂν στερεοῦ τινος ἀντιλάβηται, οὗ κατοικισθεῖσα, σῶμα γήινον λαβοῦσα, αὐτὸ αὐτὸ δοκοῦν κινεῖν διὰ τὴν ἐκείνης δύναμιν, ζῶον τὸ σύμπαν ἐκλήθη, ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα παγέν, θνητόν τ' ἔσχεν ἐκωνυμίαν·

Now when it is perfectly winged [soul] travels above the earth and governs the whole cosmos; but the one that has lost its wings is swept along until it lays hold of something solid, where it settles down, taking on an earthy body, which seems to move itself because of the power of soul, and the whole is called a living creature, soul and body fixed together, and acquires the name 'mortal' (tr. Rowe).

The perfect soul is winged (ἐπτερωμένη) and 'travels through the air' (μετεωροπορεῖ), but a soul that has lost its wings (πτερορρυήσασα) is 'swept along' (φέρεται) until it 'lays hold of' (ἀντιλάβηται) something solid where it 'settles' (κατοικισθεῖσα) and makes a new home. This is the point at which the soul 'takes on' (λαβοῦσα) a body — which must represent the moment of birth for the living creature. From now on the body receives the power of movement from the soul. The verbs ἐπτερωμένη, μετεωροπορεῖ, πτερορρυήσασα²⁵⁶ and φέρεται are consonant with the idea of a winged creature first able to move itself and later carried by an outside force (unspecified) when it loses its wings and thus its ability to fly. The notion of the soul settling itself (κατοικισθεῖσα) in the body continues the journey/home image, as discussed in the previous section. Thus the activity of the free soul is rendered more easily comprehensible through this comparison with a winged being. The difficulty of trying to describe the actions of this non-corporeal being in less coloured terms can be seen in Plato's use of the verbs ἀντιλάβηται and λαβοῦσα, which do not offer any clues as to how this intriguing process of 'laying hold of' and 'taking on' a body actually occurs. In contrast, the wing metaphor provides an account that is easier to visualise of how the soul can move freely and why it should cease to do so.

Socrates does not explain how or why the soul loses its wings until 246dff. Here he tells how 'the plumage of the soul' (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς πτέρωμα) is 'nourished and increased' (τρέφεται τε καὶ αὐξεται) by the good things that derive from the divine, while under the influence of their opposites 'it wastes away and perishes' (φθίνει τε

²⁵⁵ Lebeck offers an excellent account of the wing image and its interaction with other images in the myth (pp. 269-280).

²⁵⁶ De Vries comments on this verb (p. 128): 'After πτερορρυήσασα the pap. inserts (probably) πῶς. [...] Alline thinks that, as πτερορρυεῖν is "properly" said of birds Plato may have wished to attenuate the metaphor. But is it a metaphor?' De Vries' query seems odd, since there would seem to be no grounds for taking this unusual usage as a literal expression for the nature of the incorporeal soul.

καὶ διόλλυται). A little later this metaphor of the soul's nourishment is developed so that it is the *vision* of the Forms that provides the necessary food for the soul. Thus the act of seeing becomes the act of consuming truth (ἰδοῦσα διὰ χρόνου τὸ ὄν ἀγαπᾷ τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τάληθῇ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ, 247d).²⁵⁷ As long as a soul can see something of the vision of truth, it will remain 'unhurt' (ἀβλαβῇ, 248c5). But when a soul cannot achieve this vision, a radical change occurs. In terms of the image of the procession of gods, Socrates tells how the soul that cannot follow adequately cannot see the vision properly (248c5-8):

ὅταν δὲ ἀδυνατήσασα ἐπισπένσθαι μὴ ἴδῃ, καὶ τινι συντυχίᾳ χρησαμένη λήθῃς τε καὶ κακίας πλησθεῖσα βαρυνθῇ, βαρυνθεῖσα δὲ πτερορρυήσῃ τε καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν πέσῃ.

but whenever through inability to follow it fails to see, and through some mischance is weighed down by being filled with forgetfulness and incompetence, and because of the weight loses its wings and falls to the earth (tr. Rowe).

Here Socrates gives three reasons why the soul falls to earth: (a) as a result of not being able to follow the procession properly, it cannot see the vision of truth; (b) as a result of some 'mischance' (τινι συντυχίᾳ) it is weighed down by forgetfulness and 'evil' (λήθῃς τε καὶ κακίας); and (c) as a result of this burden it loses its wings. The first 'reason' is easy to understand: unless the soul can keep up with the procession, it will not secure a place from which it can see the necessary vision. In (b) it is not clear what the 'mischance'²⁵⁸ refers to, and the presence of τινι serves to reinforce the vagueness. Plato does not clarify whether this mischance is consequent on missing out on the vision or whether it is a secondary cause. Nevertheless, *something* causes the soul to be 'filled' (πλησθεῖσα) with forgetfulness and evil and so to 'become heavy' (βαρυνθῇ).²⁵⁹ The metaphors are multiplied in this passage as Plato seeks to bind together his different accounts of why the soul falls. In (a) the image of soul can be understood as a development of the picture of charioteer and horses (from 246a, 247b), where the soul's chariot joins in the procession of the gods in heaven to view the spectacle of the Forms. The soul/chariot cannot keep up and so the charioteer cannot 'see' the vision. In (b) the idea of weight comes into play as some 'mischance' causes the soul to be 'weighed down'.

²⁵⁷ See also 248b-c where the vision of truth (ἰδεῖν) provides the pasturage (ἡ νομή) by which the soul is fed (τρέφεται).

²⁵⁸ On the role of chance in this fall, see Ferrari, *Listening to the Cicadas*, pp. 133-5, who concludes (p. 135): 'We are not to feel guilt over our embodiment, since after all Plato's point is that we should view it as a contingency, an accident; yet we are not therefore simply to exonerate ourselves from all sense of responsibility as human agents in this matter, for if we do, we shall perpetuate the very ignorance which the myth asks us to acknowledge as a factor in the fall'.

²⁵⁹ On the reasons for the fall, see A.W. Price, *Love and Friendship in Plato and Aristotle*, pp. 73-4: 'Though the account is incomplete, its message is that divinity depends upon cognitive success, and incarnation on cognitive failure' (p. 74). Price makes the same point in *Mental Conflict* (= MC), p. 77.

This metaphor of the soul receiving weight has already been established in the myth. In his brief introduction to the subject of wings Socrates explains (246d6-7):

πέφυκεν ἡ πτεροῦ δύναμις τὸ ἐμβριθεὺς ἄγειν ἄνω μετεωρίζουσα ἢ τὸ τῶν θεῶν γένος οἰκεῖ.

The natural property of a wing is to carry what is heavy upwards, lifting it aloft to the region where the race of the gods resides (tr. Rowe).

At this point 'what is heavy' is not further defined but the idea is incorporated into the charioteer and horses image so that the second horse, which has evil in its nature, is described as *weighted* by that evil (247b3-5):

βρίθει γὰρ ὁ τῆς κάκης ἵππος μετέχων, ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων τε καὶ βαρύνων ᾧ μὴ καλῶς ἢ τεθραμμένος τῶν ἡνιόχων.

for the horse which is partly bad weighs them down, inclining them towards the earth through its weight, if any of the charioteers has not trained him well (tr. Rowe).

Thus Plato uses a metaphor of weight or heaviness for evil, so that the presence of evil actually drags downwards whatever it occurs in. The evil in the bad horse makes it heavy (βαρύνων), and so this is a constant factor that the charioteer must take account of as he tries to balance his team.²⁶⁰ If the charioteer has trained this horse well, the weight of the evil can (one supposes) be balanced somewhat, so that it does not disturb the running of the team.²⁶¹ At work in this idea is the established polarity between up/good/divine and down/evil/human.²⁶² Plato often speaks of the divine sphere as higher than the mortal world²⁶³ and skilfully manipulates the polarity in order to argue that what is down/evil/human does not have to remain fixed but can change its state and so become up/good/divine. If the soul in human life, after its fall, is able to achieve a more perfect state, it will return upwards to the immortal realm. In terms of the vehicles of these metaphors the two agents of change are weight and wings. A heavy burden will cause a body to tend downwards but if the weight is lifted, the downward pull is removed. Further, even if something remains heavy, a wing can still raise it upwards. In terms of the tenor of the metaphors the agents of change are the

²⁶⁰ On wings and weight, see Lebeck p. 270.

²⁶¹ On the notion of balance inherent in this passage, see Price (*MC*, p. 81): 'The taming of appetite produces a better balanced soul, like a biplane no longer liable to plunges, responsive to its pilot and poised for ascent'.

²⁶² On the use of oppositions in Greek thought, see: Lloyd, *PA*, ch.I 'Theories based on opposites in early Greek thought', pp. 15-85; and J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, ch.7 'Between the beasts and the gods', pp. 130-67. Vernant detects certain 'codes' at work in Greek myths and on the story of Adonis observes (p. 134): 'the decoding of the body of evidence is based upon a series of oppositions linked with one another: above-below, earth-heaven, wet-dry, raw-cooked, corruptible-incorruptible, stench-perfume, mortal-immortal; these terms . . . are organised into a coherent system'.

²⁶³ See e.g. *Tim.* 90a and *Laws* 905a. Plato also often uses the idea that the world of the Forms is above the mortal realm: see *Rep.* 517b5, c9, 518b4, 525d5, 527b10, 529b4 etc.

exercise of moral virtue (through training), the development of rationality and the positive influence of love. Weight is identified with evil,²⁶⁴ and the way to balance or lift the weight of evil is through the proper training of the horse by the charioteer. Within Plato's tripartite theory of soul the charioteer represents the rational part of soul and the bad horse the appetites. Thus the charioteer training the horse represents the rational part of the soul training the appetites. So by educating the appetites and making them more moderate the weight of evil in the soul can be lifted so that the soul can move up the scale towards divinity.

In terms of the vehicles of these metaphors the second agent of change is the wing, for if the soul can grow wings it will have another chance of moving upwards from the corporeal to the divine sphere. The means whereby a soul can grow wings becomes a key theme in Plato's myth (251b-d), as the growth is stimulated by the stream of beauty that emanates from the beloved and enters into the lover's soul. Lebeck explains how Plato connects the theme of the soul's wings with its experience of love at first sight and its memory of the Forms (pp. 272-3):

When a soul has come fresh from the mystery of Being, the beauty which it sees here awakens memory and a yearning for its winged state. [. . .] At the recollection aroused by this radiance, the soul feels its wings, long withered, start to sprout.

In the detailed passage at 251a-252b Plato's description of how the soul grows wings is, as Lebeck notes (p. 273), 'an aggregate of images'. The image of the soul's plumage is merged with the idea of a plant's foliage so that the luxurious growth in each case is, in part, produced by the warming stream of water. There is a further build-up of imagery as the idea of the base of the new feathers²⁶⁵ pushing up through the wing is likened to new shoots pushing up through the soil and to new teeth cutting their way through gums (251c).²⁶⁶ Lebeck observes the onomatopoeic quality of the passage and its erotic connotations (p. 273):

Many of the words have multiple associations and some of them are onomatopoeic. As a result they tease both the mind and ear, and the passage produces that tickling irritation which it so well describes. Thus the delineation of sexual excitement stimulates intellectual excitement, the two being, for Plato, inextricably linked. [Note 15] Even the wing itself, symbol of the soul's capacity for elevation, functions in this passage as a sexual symbol. Growing wings, raising up the wings, suggest an erection.

In the three images of feathers, shoots and teeth the upward movement of the new growth prefigures the upward movement of the soul from the earthly to the divine realm. This language of upward motion for enlightenment (i.e. the development of

²⁶⁴ On Plato's use of the idea of weight in *Phdo.* and *Phdr.*, see Price, *MC*, p. 76.

²⁶⁵ On the relationship between the feathers and wings of soul, see Price, *MC*, p. 81.

²⁶⁶ Lebeck (pp. 273-6) tracks the development of imagery in the passage, as Plato moves from wings to plants and on to medical terminology.

rationality and moral goodness through philosophical education) permeates Plato's writing.

To return to the passage at 248c5-8, the third reason why the soul falls to earth is (c) its loss of wings. The loss is directly caused by the burden of forgetfulness and evil. But why are the wings unable to support the new burden? The answer would seem to lie in the double determination of the loss of perfection: as the soul drops because of evil it can no longer be kept aloft by what is good. The wings are the power which support the soul in the divine realm, and represent the immortal and divine element in a soul (246d). Once its perfect nature becomes flawed, the soul cannot stay close to the divine; the wings that represent its perfection are lost and so the soul falls. This fall leads to the first birth of the soul in a human body (248d1-2), and so a human birth occurs when a once perfect soul becomes imperfect. The soul is now separated from the gods. Once the soul has entered the cycle of rebirths it can only regain its wings (πτερωθεῖσαι, 249a4, 249c4; ὑπόπτεροι, 256b4) by developing its rational capacities and achieving both knowledge and moral goodness. Because it is only through recollection of the Forms that the soul can become close again to the gods, 'it is with justice that only the mind (διάνοια) of the philosopher becomes winged (πτεροῦται)' (249c4-5). Soon the idea of wings is transferred from the soul/mind to the whole person, as Socrates tells how the philosopher's desire to fly upwards to the gods causes him to be regarded as mad (249d):

ἔστι δὴ οὖν δεῦρο ὁ πᾶς ἦκων λόγος περὶ τῆς τετάρτης μανίας, ἣν ὅταν τὸ τῆδ' ἐτις ὁρῶν κάλλος, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς ἀναμνησκόμενος, πτερωταὶ τε καὶ ἀναπτερούμενος προθυμούμενος ἀναπτέσθαι, ἀδυνατῶν δέ, ὄρνιθος δίκην βλέπων ἄνω, τῶν κάτω δέ ἀμελῶν, αἰτίαν ἔχει ὥς μανικῶς διακείμενος.

Well then, the result of my whole account of the fourth kind of madness is clear — the madness of the man who, on seeing beauty here on earth, and being reminded of true beauty, becomes winged, and fluttering with eagerness to fly upwards, but unable to leave the ground, looking upwards like a bird, and taking no heed of the things below, causes him to be regarded as mad (tr. Rowe).

Socrates concludes that this is the best kind of divine possession and that it is this experience of loving real beauty that renders a man a true lover (249e). The simile of the stranded bird²⁶⁷ offers a tender image of the plight of the soul whose wings struggle in vain against its earthbound body. As earlier in the myth (246b-c), the solid earthiness of the body tends downwards while the soul longs to fly upwards, and the inertia of the body is in tension with the lively movement of the soul. The fluttering of wings also suggests the excitement of erotic arousal.

The *Phaedrus* myth is the only place where Plato develops the idea of the winged soul and this would seem partly due to the particular definition of soul given before the

²⁶⁷ On the bird image, see Lebeck, p. 273.

myth — namely, self-movement (245e). For the wing metaphor, unlike the image of a traveller returning home, depicts the soul in its perfect state as in perpetual motion: journeying on high (μετεωροπορεῖ, 246c) and living a life of happiness *travelling* in the divine sphere (φανὸν βίον διάγοντας εὐδαιμονεῖν μετ' ἀλλήλων πορευομένου, 256d8-e1). Friedländer suggests (p. 193) that the winged *Eros* is a possible model for Plato's winged *psyche*, and Ferrari points out how Plato's choice of the image of charioteer and horses recalls the earlier love poetry of Anacreon.²⁶⁸ These images are indeed erotic and through them Plato is able to fuse their tenor and vehicles. For the effects of love on the perpetually moving soul (tenor) are described in terms of both erotic language (winged cupid and sexual control) and movement (as the wings fly upwards and the team drives onwards). This fusion of ideas in turn supports Plato's vision of the soul as the source of emotion *and* motion. As well as fitting the particular subject-matter of the passage, the images also complement Plato's choice of setting. Lebeck (p. 280) has noted how the prologue of *Phaedrus* is intimately connected with the myth:

The prologue which creates a setting for the central myth has much in common with it. Both myth and prologue translate the same ideas into a story which unfolds in time and space; motifs and images which describe states of being in the myth appear in the prologue as part of the scenic background and the personal exchange between Socrates and Phaedrus. [. . .] In this way the setting introduces elements used later to describe love's symptoms and the soul's growth of wings: heat, flowing liquid and vegetation.

Thus the countryside setting with its lush trees and grass (230b3-5, 230c3-5), its cool stream (230b6-7), the noonday sun (229a, 242a) and busy insect life (230c2-3) forms the perfect backdrop for soul metaphors which include the growth of plants, a stream of water, fever and winged movement. This organic relation between Plato's choice of setting and his imagery of soul can also be seen in *Phaedo* and *Charmides*. In *Phaedo* Socrates' prison cell becomes the setting for images of soul as a prisoner, bound in the body (see appendix 2) and in *Charmides* the gymnasium provides an appropriate backdrop for images of the soul's health and exercise (see appendix 2).

Although the winged soul does not appear elsewhere in Plato outside the *Phaedrus*, there is an echo of it at *Timaeus* 81e, where the soul is presented as 'flying away' from the body at death (81d7-e1): [ψυχῇ] ἡ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο ('and she [soul], when thus set free in the course of nature, finds pleasure in

²⁶⁸ Ferrari, *Cicadas*, pp. 107-8 (with n. 26) and p. 265, n. 21. The imagery of horses and riders in homoerotic imagery is discussed by Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, pp. 58-9 (see p. 163 on Plato's charioteer). Dover cites Theognis 1249-52 (where a boy is compared to a horse which needs a good charioteer) and 1267-70 (where a boy is like a horse which has cast one rider into the dust and now bears another). Dover observes, 'the imagery of horse, reins and rider is familiar with reference to heterosexual intercourse from Anacreon fr. 417'. See also Anacreon fr. 360 for the idea of the soul's 'charioteer' (τῆς ἐμῆς / ψυχῆς ἡνιοχεύεις).

taking wing to fly away', tr. Cornford). The idea that the soul can fly is already established in Homeric poetry where one of the ways that the soul leaves the body at death is by flying away,²⁶⁹ and where once in the underworld the souls 'flit' (ἀΐσσουσι) and 'fly' (πταμένη, ποτέονται) like 'bats'.²⁷⁰

The metaphor of the wings of the soul provides an account of how soul and body are first joined together — as the perfect soul loses its wings and falls to earth — and how the presence of soul (as that which moves itself and that which in its perfect state is in perpetual motion) gives life and movement to the otherwise inert mortal body. The idea of wings also explains (at the metaphorical level) how good souls can leave the body at death and fly upwards to the heavenly sphere, while inferior souls, still wingless, are unable to make this journey and so must remain in the cycle of births and deaths.

3. *Seeds and Plants*

A third Platonic metaphor for the coming together of soul and body at the point of birth is that of the soul as a seed sown into the soil of the body. In the *Phaedo* the soul is described as 'implanted' (ἐμφύεσθαι, 83e1) and 'as it were sown' (ὥσπερ σπειρομένη, 83e1) in the body, and at *Phaedrus* 248d1 Socrates speaks of the 'planting' (φύτευσαι) of a soul into an animal. However, this metaphor for birth and death is developed extensively only in the *Timaeus*, where it plays a significant role in the explanation of how the Demiurge creates humankind and how the body can create further life through procreation. The metaphor is introduced at 41c8 as the Demiurge speaks of 'sowing the seed' (σπείρας) of the immortal part of the soul, and is continued at 41e4 when it is said that the souls, or rather parts of souls, created by the Demiurge are to be 'sown' (σπαρείσας) into the 'instruments of time' (tr. Cornford) adapted to them. These 'instruments of time' (ὄργανα χρόνων), or physical bodies, become places in which the seed can grow (φύναι, 42a1). At 42a3 the placing of souls in bodies is described as 'implanting' (ἐμφυτεύθειν) and at 42d4 it is said that the creator 'sowed' (ἔσπειρεν) some souls in the earth, some in the moon and some in the other instruments of time. The metaphor is continued at 42d6 as Timaeus tells that μετὰ τὸν σπóρον (after the sowing) the creator committed to the younger gods the task of fashioning mortal bodies. During this sowing, it would seem that the soul-seeds are scattered into unformed matter which will only later be worked into bodily form.

The next development of this metaphor comes at 73b-c where it is expanded into a larger picture of plant life. In this section the creator places the different forms of soul into the marrow of the human body. First the 'bonds of life' which unite soul and body are said to be 'rooted' or 'planted firmly' (κατερρίζουν, 73b4) in the marrow, and

²⁶⁹ See Bremmer, *The Early Greek Concept of the Soul*, pp. 17 and 73.

²⁷⁰ See *Il.* 16.856, 22.363; *Od.* 10.495, 24.6. See also *Rep.* 386d-387a on Homeric views. The specific metaphor of the soul having wings is not used in these passages but Plato's novel idea is clearly influenced by the notion that the soul can fly.

second the creator is described as ‘planting’ (φύτεύων, 73c3) the different kinds of soul in the marrow. This picture is then given greater detail as the rational part of the soul is assigned to a particular portion of the marrow (73c6-d1):

καὶ τὴν μὲν τὸ θεῖον σπέρμα οἷον ἄρουραν μέλλουσαν ἔξειν ἐν αὐτῇ περιφερῇ πανταχῇ πλάσας ἐκωνόμασεν τοῦ μυελοῦ ταύτην τὴν μοῖραν ἐγκέφαλον.

And he moulded into spherical shape the ploughland, as it were, that was to contain the divine seed; and this part of the marrow he named ‘brain’ (tr. Cornford).

Through the simile οἷον ἄρουραν the marrow becomes the ‘tilled, arable land’, or simply the ‘soil’, for the divine seed — that is, the rational part of the soul. It is entirely appropriate that this part of the soul, reason, which was ‘sown’ by the Demiurge at 41c8, should now be ‘planted’ in the marrow that will form the brain. However, Cornford understands this passage as referring to semen (p. 295 n.1):

That ‘the divine seed’ here means the semen is explicitly stated at 91b1. It is ‘divine’ as being part of the marrow which contains the immortal part of the soul, and also as being the vehicle and means of the immortality of the species.

However, it is not explicitly stated at 91b that ‘divine seed’ at 73c7 means semen, for 91b states simply: μυελὸν . . . ὃν δὴ σπέρμα ἐν τοῖς πρόσθεν λόγοις εἶπομεν (‘marrow . . . which indeed we called “seed” in our earlier discussion’). Marrow has been called ‘seed’ (σπέρμα) at 74a4 and 74b3. I am not arguing that σπέρμα at 91b does not indirectly refer to semen — it must, as the semen is the part of the marrow that becomes the life-carrier. But at 91b1 it is the μυελός that is directly referred to as σπέρμα, and it is μυελός that is said to ‘have life’ and to become ‘endowed with respiration’ (ὁ δὲ, ἅτ’ ἐμψυχὸς ὢν καὶ λαβὼν ἀναπνοήν). Since the participles here are masculine, not neuter, it is the (masculine) marrow which is explicitly said to create in us the love of procreation (91b4). Thus the semen is not directly referred to as σπέρμα, and still less as θεῖον σπέρμα, and these terms must refer rather to the rational part of the soul. Cornford himself point out (p. 353) that τὸ θεῖον is used at 76b, 90a and 90c4 to mean simply ‘the brain’, and this usage stems from the idea that the brain contains the rational and immortal part of the soul.

The confusion here arises from Plato’s use of the term σπέρμα (seed) for both the rational part of the soul and for the marrow into which it is placed. Why does he use the same term for both? The metaphor of the soul as a seed (σπέρμα) is appropriate for expressing how soul is introduced into the body. First, it offers a familiar picture of how one entity can be placed inside another, and second, the connotations of life and growth effectively convey how the soul animates the body. The ordinary Greek term for semen was σπέρμα and, when Plato identifies marrow with semen at 91b, it is natural that he should use the same term for both. But the double use of the term ‘seed’ for both soul and marrow also produces a very neat effect. The idea of marrow as both soil for the soul-seed and as seed itself presents the marrow as a mediator between the

first act of creation and all subsequent acts. For when the marrow receives the soul, it is acting as its soil, providing an environment in which it can grow. But also, through receiving the soul, marrow itself becomes 'instinct with life' (91b) and thus becomes the seed from which further human life will develop. By imaging the marrow as both soil and seed Plato provides an illustration of how the Demiurge and lesser gods create humankind and how the body in turn can itself create further life, through procreation. The creator implants the soul-seed into the marrow-soil. The marrow then becomes the male body's own seed (semen) which will be sown into a woman's body. In turn, the woman's body becomes the new ἄρουρα, the new soil for the seed (91d2-3): εἰς ἄρουραν τὴν μήτραν . . . κατασπείραντες. Further, by using the same term for the rational part of the soul and for the semen — both of which are associated with the marrow — Plato can suggest a very close connection between life and rationality.

The final development of the metaphors of seeds and plants in the *Timaeus* comes at 90a6-8 where human beings are spoken of as 'a plant of a heavenly nature' (φυτὸν οὐκ ἐγγεῖον ἀλλὰ οὐράνιον) and where the head is referred to as the 'root' of human beings (τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ ῥίζαν ἡμῶν). Both of these ideas derive from the metaphor of the rational part of the soul as a divine seed: like the seed of a plant, the immortal soul is the original and primary part of the being, and as a seed pushes upwards in its growth, so the immortal part of the soul (according to the polarity of up/divine and down/earthly) strains to move upwards from its earthly existence towards the divine. The inversion of ideas here, where humans are shown as having their origins not on earth but in the heavens, is part of Plato's rhetorical project of convincing his audience that the traditional Greek views on life, death and the relationship between gods and men must be jettisoned in favour of the 'true' account of the life of the immortal soul. While from a limited perspective humans are 'earthly' plants, the bigger picture shows that their roots and their seeds come from the heavens. Thus, although our earthly perspective makes us think that the feet are the lower part of man and the head moves away from these origins on earth towards the heavens, a true, philosophical perspective shows that the top part of man (his head) is actually the root, which entails that the rest of the human plant grows downwards towards the earth. Thus Plato playfully inverts the established polarity of up and down so that movement works in two directions. First from top to bottom: in terms of origins, human beings come from heaven down to earth and in terms of the body as a plant, the head (normally perceived as the top) is actually the root so that the rest of the plant must grow 'downwards'. Second from bottom to top: in terms of spiritual development the soul now encased in the body must ever strive 'upwards' in order to get back to its divine origins.

The metaphor of sowing or planting the soul is similar to the images of the journey and wings in that it presents a version of how soul and body come to be united when a living creature is born. However, unlike the former images, the metaphor of the soul as a seed offers no account of the departure of the soul upon the death of the body. For, apart from the notion of 'uprooting' the plant for re-bedding elsewhere (an idea which Plato does not develop), it is difficult to imagine how the human 'plant' can move

from one life to the next. Similarly, there is no way for the human plant simply to cease to exist while leaving the original seed (the immortal soul) intact. The metaphor thus breaks down at this point. But in one important area the metaphor of soul-seed has advantages that outweigh those of the journey and wing images. For the soul-seed is far more effective than the others in offering an account of the generation of new life through procreation, since the soul-seed animates the marrow which, as semen, becomes itself the carrier of life. Thus Plato uses his different metaphors alongside one another to exploit their individual potential and to overcome their particular limitations.

4. Bonds

The final group of images and metaphors in this section describes both the coming together at birth and the separation at death of soul and body. On a number of occasions Plato presents birth as the process whereby soul is bound to or imprisoned in the body and death as the process whereby all bonds are loosened and the soul is set free. The imagery of bonds is used in different ways in three dialogues: the *Phaedo*, *Cratylus* and *Timaeus*. In the *Phaedo* the language of imprisonment and bonds develops, like the journey image, from the idea that death is the ἀπαλλαγή (64c5) of the soul from the body. As discussed above, ἀπαλλαγή can mean 'departure' but can also mean 'release' — an idea which leads easily into more colourful metaphors of the removal of bonds and shackles. At 67d4 Socrates sets out the view that death is: λύσις καὶ χωρισμός ψυχῆς ἀπὸ σώματος ('the freeing and separation of soul from body'). If death is the λύσις (freeing, unloosening) of soul from body, then conversely birth is the tying or binding of soul in body — an idea which is presented at both 81e2 and 92a1. At 81e2 the souls that are unable to depart after death to the invisible realm are said to 'wander' until: πάλιν ἐνδεθῶσιν εἰς σῶμα ('they are bound once more into a body'). At 92a1 Socrates explains how the theory of recollection entails the view that the soul must have existed somewhere else 'before it was bound in the body' (πρὶν ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐνδεθῆναι). So the union of soul and body at the birth of a human being is presented as the physical binding of the soul in or into the body, and the soul in its human life is spoken of as 'bound', 'tied' or 'fastened' in the body: διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι (82e2); δεδέσθαι (83a1) and καταδεῖται . . . ὑπὸ σώματος (83d1).

The metaphor of binding suggests that the soul is fastened to the body in the manner of an inanimate object. In the *Phaedo* this is developed into a picture of the soul as a human prisoner only when Socrates speaks, in more highly charged terms, of philosophy as the liberator of soul. The metaphor of the imprisoned soul will be examined in the next section as part of my discussion on how the body affects the soul in life. For the current theme of birth and death, let it simply be observed that Plato adopted the idea of the incarceration of the soul from earlier Orphic thinkers. In the *Cratylus* Socrates discusses the origins of the word σῶμα and tells how the Orphic poets

probably invented it in line with their belief that in life the body acts as the soul's prison-house, keeping it safe (σῶμα, σώζεται) until the penalty is paid (400c5-9):

δοκοῦσι μέντοι μοι μάλιστα θέσθαι οἱ ἄμφι Ὀρφέα τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα, ὥς δίκην διδούσης τῆς ψυχῆς ὧν δὴ ἔνεκα δίδωσιν, τοῦτον δὲ περίβολον ἔχειν, ἵνα σώζεται, δεσμωτερίου εἰκόνα· εἶναι οὖν τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο, ὥσπερ αὐτὸ ὀνομάζεται, ἕως ἂν ἐκτείσῃ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα, τὸ 'σῶμα'.

Probably the Orphic poets were the inventors of the name, and they were under the impression that the soul is suffering the punishment of sin, and that the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is incarcerated, kept safe, as the name 'σῶμα' implies, until the penalty is paid (tr. Jowett).

With regard to the processes of birth and death, Plato does not develop this idea of the soul's imprisonment and there are no pictures of how soul is first 'chained' or 'shackled' to the body. Instead, when he considers the birth processes, Plato chooses to work with the much less emotive metaphor of the binding and connecting of physical objects. This more neutral idea of connection is nevertheless used to great effect in the *Timaeus* where it helps to explain how soul is joined to the body and how it is able to leave at death.

In the *Timaeus* the metaphor of bonds fits very well with the dominant metaphor of the whole dialogue — that of the creation of the universe as the work of craftsman gods. Among their various labours as they fashion the universe, the Demiurge and lesser gods work at binding the different parts of the soul into the human body: ἐνέδουν (43a5); ἐνδεθῆ (44b1); ἐνέδουν (69e3-4); κατέδησαν (70e3-4); κατέδει (73c-4). The soul is described as bound specifically to the marrow and the bonds that hold it are referred to as 'the bonds of life' (73b3-4):

οἱ γὰρ τοῦ βίου δεσμοί, τῆς ψυχῆς τῷ σώματι συνδουμένης, ἐν τούτῳ διαδόμενοι.

for the bonds of life, so long as the soul is bound up with the body, were made fast in it (tr. Cornford).

The metaphor of the binding of soul in the marrow is further developed at 73d as Plato introduces the idea of anchors. Speaking of the primary triangles which make up the marrow, Timaeus explains the Demiurge's methods of linking the soul to the body (73d5-7):

καὶ καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν βαλλόμενος ἐκ τούτων πάσης ψυχῆς δεσμοὺς περὶ τοῦτο σύμπαν ἤδη τὸ σῶμα ἡμῶν ἀπηγάζετο.

From these, as if from anchors, he put forth bonds to fasten all the soul; and now began to fashion our whole body round this thing (tr. Cornford).

So the triangles of the marrow become the anchors around which the bonds of the soul are tied so as to secure the soul to the body. The δεσμοί, then, are fastenings which are tied at one end to the soul and at the other to the marrow. The simile καθάπερ ἐξ

ἀγκυρῶν suggests that the soul is attached to the body like a ship at anchor, an idea which is made explicit at 85e. The relationship between the triangles of the marrow and the fastenings of the soul is portrayed in further detail at 81b-d, as Timaeus explains how the bonds of the soul come to be undone.

At 81b Timaeus tells how the triangles of the marrow are themselves linked together and how, when a creature is young, the links between the triangles are firm and strong (81b7-8): ἰσχυράν μὲν τὴν σύγκλεισιν αὐτῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλα κέκτηται ('their joints are firmly locked together', tr. Cornford). This firm arrangement of triangles allows eating and drinking to take place, since these processes are portrayed in terms of the triangles of the marrow 'cutting up' (τέμνουσα, 81c5), 'overpowering' (ἐπικρατεῖ, 81c5) and so absorbing the triangles of the food and drink that enter the body. This contact between the body and food is presented as a struggle when at 81c7-d1 such contacts are referred to as 'the fighting of contests' (τὸ . . . ἀγῶνας . . . ἡγωνίσθαι). Here Timaeus tells how the 'root' of the triangles (i.e. that which links them together) 'slackens' or 'loosens' (χαλᾷ, 81c7) as a result of the many conflicts fought over a lifetime. Once the inner arrangement begins to loosen, the triangles are easily divided (δισαίρεται, 81d3) by the matter entering from outside. Timaeus explains that in this way every creature is 'overcome' and that this experience is called 'old age' (γήρας). Therefore over time the links between the triangles of the marrow slacken and this has a significant effect on their efficiency as the 'anchors' of the bonds of the soul. The natural conclusion of this process of slackening and loosening follows at 81d4-e1:

τέλος δέ, ἐπειδὴν τῶν περὶ τὸν μυελὸν τριγώνων οἱ συναρμοσθέντες μηκέτι ἀντέχωσιν δεσμοὶ τῷ πόνῳ διιστάμενοι, μεθίσιν τοὺς τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῷ δεσμούς, ἡ δὲ λυθεῖσα κατὰ φύσιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἐξέπτατο.

And at last, when the conjoined bonds of the triangles in the marrow no longer hold out under the stress, but part asunder, they let go in their turn the bonds of the soul; and she, when thus set free in the course of nature, finds pleasure in taking wing to fly away (tr. Cornford).

Thus in the course of life the bonds fastening together the triangles of the marrow gradually wear out and, once the triangles separate, this action releases the bonds by which the gods first fastened soul to body. The soul once 'bound' is now 'loosened' or 'released' (λυθεῖσα). In this way the presentation of death as the λύσις of the soul (*Phaedo*) is shown to be grounded in a series of physical processes. Plato uses the description of the triangles of the marrow, first tightly bound and then slowly loosening, to give greater detail and precision to his claim that the soul is joined to the body in life and comes apart from it in death. Corporeal and incorporeal nature meet at the point where the physical triangles of matter that make up the marrow serve as 'anchors' (καθάπερ ἐξ ἀγκυρῶν) for the 'bonds' (δεσμούς) that tether soul to body. Thus the metaphors and imagery of bonds allow Plato to develop a terminology that can 'explain' the processes whereby the soul is tied to the body. But this 'explanation'

only holds at the metaphorical level, for once one tries to ‘cash in’ the metaphor, one is left simply with the ideas that the immaterial soul is *somehow* attached to corporeal matter and that the way it is attached is *in some respects* like the way one object is tied to another by means of an anchor and rope. The explanation cannot be probed any further than this. For if one asks: ‘what part of the soul’s nature allows this attachment to be made?’, or ‘how exactly can the incorporeal be fastened to the corporeal?’, there is no answer in literal or abstract terms.

The metaphor of the soul’s bonds is further used by Plato at *Timaeus* 85e to explain how some illnesses can cause death. Here Timaeus tells how excessive bile in the body can penetrate to the marrow and thus (85e6-7):

κάουσα ἔλυσεν τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτόθεν οἷον νεῶς πείσματα μεθήκεν τε ἔλευθέραν.

in consuming it unlooses the soul from her moorings there as a ship and sets her free (tr. Cornford, adapted).

In this phrase the soul is explicitly likened by means of a simile to a ship (οἷον νεῶς). The simile is introduced as a further illustration of the idea already present in the verb ἔλυσεν, which has τὰ πείσματα as its direct object. Timaeus tells how the bile ‘loosens the cables of the soul’ and then adds ‘like a ship’ to clarify his point. So the simile is there to support the metaphor of the soul’s ‘cables’. Thus the simile of anchors at 73d5 is completed by the new simile of the ship, and the idea is amplified that the soul is fastened to the body just as a ship is anchored to land. Further, the ‘bonds’ (δεσμούς) of the soul are now characterised more graphically as ‘cables’ or ‘ropes’. The phrase μεθήκεν . . . ἔλευθέραν provides an interesting twist to the imagery already in place. The verb μεθίημι can mean ‘set loose, let go’ when used of an object and ‘release, set free’ when used of a person. At first sight the verb here refers directly to the πείσματα and so the expected translation is ‘let go’, but the next word, ἔλευθέραν, forces a shift. This adjective is feminine in form and so refers to the soul. Since its meaning (‘free’) cannot appropriately apply to a ship, the adjective forces a change of perspective so that the soul is once again regarded as a person and the verb is best translated as ‘set free’. Thus μεθήκεν functions as a glide term between the idea of the soul as a ship at anchor and as a person imprisoned in the body. By introducing the notion of ‘freedom’, which clashes with the ship image, Plato evokes, with one deft touch, the complex of ideas whereby the soul is a prisoner in the body during life. By this synthesis Plato brings into play the moral dimension of the imprisonment image and so achieves a harmony of his biological and moral views on the departure of the soul.

A final application of the metaphor of the soul’s bonds occurs as Plato focuses on the actual moment of birth and gives a wonderfully detailed portrayal of what goes on in the soul at this crucial transition. At 35a-37a Timaeus explains how the Demiurge creates the soul. The Demiurge fashions for the soul a mathematically proportioned structure, which gives rise to the existence of ‘intervals’ (διαστάσεων, 36a6) and

'connecting terms' (δεσμῶν, 36a7).²⁷¹ This idea of inner connections and links is then taken up later at 43d6-e2, as Timaeus tells how these links are violently affected when the gods set the soul inside the human body. In order to clarify the meaning of the relevant passage, it must be added that in the intervening section Timaeus has also developed the view that the soul's nature is composed of certain 'circles': first, the two main circles of the Same and of the Different (formed from the original soul mixture (36c), and second, the seven unequal circles fashioned from the circle of the Different (36d2).²⁷² So, drawing on these ideas that the inner nature of the soul is composed of circles and contains various inner links, Timaeus describes the moment of its birth in a human frame (43a ff.). The human body is itself in a permanent state of flux (43a) and into this the gods 'bound the moving courses' of the soul (τὰς τῆς ἀθανάτου ψυχῆς περιόδους ἐνέδουν εἰς . . . σῶμα, 43a4-5). The introduction of the soul bestows movement on the body but this movement is initially irregular due to the huge upheaval that the soul experiences on its first contact with corporeal matter. The soul is not used either to the great buffeting that it suffers from the 'floods' of the body it occupies (πολλοῦ γὰρ ὄντος τοῦ κατακλύζοντος καὶ ἀπορρέοντος κύματος, 43b) or to the impact of outside bodies (43b-c). Thus these 'sensations' produced a disastrous effect on the soul (43c7-d2):

καὶ δὴ καὶ τότε ἐν τῷ παρόντι πλείστην καὶ μεγίστην παρεχόμεναι κίνησιν, μετὰ τοῦ ῥέοντος ἐνδελεχῶς ὀχετοῦ κινεῖσθαι καὶ σφοδρῶς σείουσιν τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς περιόδους,

And so at the moment we speak of, causing for the time being a strong and widespread commotion and joining with that perpetually streaming current in stirring and violently shaking the circuits of the soul, (tr. Cornford).

This upheaval also wrecks damage on the inner bonds of the soul (43d2-e2):

τὴν μὲν ταῦτοῦ παντάπασιν ἐπέδησαν ἐναντία αὐτῇ ῥέουσιν καὶ ἐπέσχον ἄρχουσιν καὶ ἰοῦσαν, τὴν δ' αὖ θατέρου διέσεισαν, ὥστε τὰς τοῦ διπλασίου καὶ τριπλασίου τρεῖς ἑκατέρας ἀποστάσεις καὶ τὰς . . . μεσότητος καὶ συνδέσεις, ἐπειδὴ παντελῶς λυταὶ οὐκ ἦσαν πλὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ συνδήσαντος, πάσας μὲν στρέψαι στροφάς, πάσας δὲ κλάσεις καὶ διαφθοράς τῶν κύκλων ἐμποιεῖν.

they completely hampered the revolution of the Same by flowing counter to it and stopped it from going on its way and governing; and they dislocated the revolution of the Different. Accordingly, the intervals of the double and the

²⁷¹ The same blend of mathematical and physical proportions can be seen at 37a4, where soul is said to have been 'in due proportion divided and bound together' (tr. Cornford) — ἀνὰ λόγον μερισθεῖσα καὶ συνδεθεῖσα.

²⁷² For an excellent discussion on the status and significance of these soul circles, see Sedley, "Becoming like god" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle'. Sedley argues (pp. 328-30) that Plato's notion of soul circles or circuits is not simply metaphorical but 'is meant as physical fact too' (p. 329).

triple, three of each sort, and the connecting means of the ratios . . . , since they could not be completely dissolved save by him who bound them together, were twisted by them in all manner of ways, and all possible infractions and deformations of the circles were caused (tr. Cornford).

Thus the inner bonds (συνδέσεις) of the soul are severely strained and twisted as a result of soul's entry into a body. But still this violent effect is not enough actually to break or undo the bonds, which can only be undone by the Demiurge himself. Although it is not stated explicitly, the continued existence of the soul must depend upon these bonds remaining fast, and here it is confirmed that nothing else other than the creator can untie them. Thus one of the essential differences between body and soul is highlighted: for whereas the bonds of the body (in the triangles of the marrow) are loosened by old age or illness which leads to death, the bonds of the soul can only be loosened by the creator himself. So while it is natural for the body to die after a certain time, the soul will live forever, unless the Demiurge wills otherwise. This point accords with the Demiurge's own proclamation at 41a7: δι' ἐμοῦ γε γινόμενα ἄλυτα ἐμοῦ γε μὴ ἐθέλοντος ('those [creations] which are my own handiwork are indissoluble, save with my consent', tr. Cornford)²⁷³ and recalls a passage in the *Phaedo* (80b9-10), where the soul is agreed to be 'quite or very nearly indissoluble' (τὸ παράπαν ἀδιαλύτῳ . . . ἢ ἐγγύς τι τούτου).

In conclusion, the complex of metaphors and images presenting different types of bonds, links and connections offers accounts of:

- (1) how the soul is attached to the body at birth;
- (2) how the life of the body depends on the presence of soul;

and

- (3) why the body is subject to death in the natural course of events while the soul is not.

This completes my analysis of the four sets of images which portray how the soul is introduced into the human body at birth and how it leaves it upon death. In this section I have focused only on the points of union and separation between body and soul, as this provides a useful starting point for tracking Plato's general use of metaphor for the soul. Some of these metaphors and images for the soul recur in other contexts where Plato uses them for quite different ends. In the next section, with the theme of how body affects soul and how soul responds, it will be shown how two of these metaphors for life and death (union/departure and bonds) are transferred into the soul's experience during human life itself. And to these will be added a third — that of corruption and purification — as Plato (in the *Phaedo*) intensifies his negative presentation of body.

²⁷³ Price comments on the souls in this passage (*MC*, p. 82): 'not essentially immortal, and yet fit for immortality, they have been well put together in a good state, unlike the imperfectly compounded and perishing souls of *Republic* Book 10 (611b5-6)'.

III. Human Life

There are two fundamental points to bear in mind in interpreting Plato's portrayal of the relations between soul and body: the two entities are of wholly different natures and there is no equality of status between the two. Soul is the undisputed superior of the body, a point on which much of Plato's philosophy depends. In the *Phaedo* Socrates contrasts the natures of soul and body and at 80b1-5 draws the conclusion that:

τῷ μὲν θείῳ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ νοητῷ καὶ μονοειδεῖ καὶ ἀδιαλύτῳ αἰὲν ὡσαύτως κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον εἶναι ψυχῇ, τῷ δὲ ἀνθρωπίνῳ καὶ θνητῷ καὶ ἀνοήτῳ καὶ πολυειδεῖ καὶ διαλυτῷ καὶ μηδέποτε κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἔχοντι ἑαυτῷ ὁμοιότατον αὐτὸ εἶναι σῶμα.

Soul is most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, unvarying, and constant in relation to itself; whereas body, in its turn, is most similar to what is human, mortal, multiform, non-intelligible, dissoluble, and never constant in relation to itself (tr. Gallop).

From its close relation to what is immortal and changeless the soul is regarded as like the divine and as inhabiting the same realm as the gods when in its perfect state.²⁷⁴ It follows, then, that the soul is superior and more honourable than the body, which shares in all the imperfections and unstable qualities of the corporeal world. The view of soul as superior to body is expressed in various passages (see e.g. *Timaeus* 34c and *Laws* 731c, 959a) and the soul's excellence is linked with its seniority (*Timaeus* 34b-35a and *Laws* 896b and 967c). Plato expresses the superiority of soul over body in metaphors of power: the soul becomes the master/mistress and ruler, while the body becomes its slave or subject. The point is made succinctly at *Phaedo* 79e8-80a2:

ἐπειδὴν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὧσι ψυχὴ καὶ σῶμα, τῷ μὲν δουλεύειν καὶ ἀρχεσθαι ἢ φύσις προστάττει, τῇ δὲ ἀρχειν καὶ δεσπόζειν·

when soul and body are present in the same thing, nature ordains that the one shall serve and be ruled, whereas the other shall rule and be master (tr. Gallop).

The same point is made at *Timaeus* 34b-35a, where soul is older and more venerable than body (καὶ γενέσκει καὶ ἀρετῇ προτέραν καὶ πρεσβυτέραν) and is made by God to be body's 'mistress and governor' (δεσπότιν καὶ ἀρξουσάν), and at *Laws* 896b-c, where it is said that soul is prior to matter and that σῶμα δὲ δεύτερόν τε καὶ ὕστερον, ψυχῆς ἀρχούσης, ἀρχόμενον κατὰ φύσιν ('matter came later and takes second place. Soul is the master, and matter its natural subject', tr. Saunders).

There is, then, for Plato a 'natural' dominance (ἢ φύσις προστάττει, *Phaedo*, and κατὰ φύσιν, *Laws*) of soul over body. Now while this might suggest that in human life the soul exercises an effortless control over the body and all its affairs, this is not

²⁷⁴ *Phd.* 79d, 80d, 81a; *Rep.* 611e; *Phdr.* 246e, 248a, 248c, 249c.

Plato's view. For although the soul is indisputably superior and is responsible for life, movement and rationality, still the body and its concerns challenge the rule of the soul and at times apparently even threaten the very nature of soul. The metaphor of the soul's loss of wings illustrates how union with the body is a consequence, and indeed manifestation, of the soul's loss of perfection and separation from the divine realm (*Phaedrus* 246c, 248c-d). But once the soul is united with the body, further problems are in store for it, as the passage at *Timaeus* 43d-e makes abundantly clear. In the next section I shall examine three groups of metaphors which explore the effects of body on soul during human life and which contribute to Plato's constant theme of the benefits of philosophy.

1. Union and Separation

For Plato the soul is, amongst other functions, the immortal principle of life and the rational element in human beings — the means by which we reason, think and know. Reasoning is a natural activity of the soul and one best achieved when the soul is unhindered by the body. In Plato's view earthly life is detrimental to this proper functioning of the soul because the body, with its attendant needs and desires, is an impediment to pure thought. When the soul in its natural state reasons, it does so with reference to the eternal immutable Forms, the only entities which can be truly known. At *Republic* 476e-480a Plato argues that all knowledge must be knowledge of the Forms and at 508e3 designates the Form of the Good as the 'cause of knowledge' (αἰτία . . . ἐπιστήμης). Thus Plato sets up a very close relationship between that which knows (soul) and that which can be known (Forms).²⁷⁵ Soul in its natural state is soul in its perfect state for Plato, and when perfect soul is able fully to contemplate the Forms, this contemplation in turn fosters or reinforces the soul's excellence (*Phaedrus* 247d). But when soul loses the ability to discern true reality, its perfect state is marred (*Phaedrus* 248c-d). As a result soul enters a body and so life in the body is presented as a separation of soul from its natural or perfect state and from contact with the Forms (*Phaedo* 80c). On being joined with body soul passes from the invisible, changeless world into the corporeal realm where everything is in flux and therefore where nothing can be known. Without contact with the Forms, the soul cannot have knowledge and so cannot reason properly, for it has lost its standard of what is real or true. Further, the soul's powers of reasoning are impaired by the body itself, since the senses of sight, hearing and touching *etc.*, rooted as they are in physical nature, convey only inaccurate information to the soul (*Phaedo* 65b).²⁷⁶ A third impediment in human life to the

²⁷⁵ *Rep.* 611e. Standard literature on the subject of knowledge and the Forms includes: W.D. Ross, *Plato's Theory of Ideas*; R.E. Allen (ed.), *Studies in Plato's Metaphysics*; Vlastos (ed.), *Plato: A Collection of Critical Essays*; N.P. White, *Plato on Knowledge and Reality*; and Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's Republic*, (see esp. ch. 8, 'Belief, knowledge and understanding', and ch. 9, 'The "theory" of Forms').

²⁷⁶ On Plato's views on knowledge and sense-perception, see Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*; N. Gulley, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge*; W. Bondeson, 'Perception, true

soul's activity of reasoning comes from the situation where both physical pleasures (eating, drinking, sex *etc.*) and diseases distract the soul from pure thought (*Phaedo* 66a, 66b-c). Thus Plato suggests strong reasons why the body has a detrimental effect on the soul and its rational activity.

To counteract these negative effects of the body, soul has only one recourse: to resist the body's influence by becoming as independent as possible. This process is represented in the *Phaedo* as the separation of soul from body. In this dialogue Socrates develops the view that it is only in the course of reasoning and reflection (ἐν τῷ λογίζεσθαι, 65c2) that the soul is able to attain knowledge of reality (65b-c) and that the soul can best reflect when it becomes independent of the body (65c5-10):

Λογίζεται δέ γέ που τότε κάλλιστα, όταν αὐτὴν τούτων μηδὲν παραλυπῇ, μήτε ἀκοή μήτε ὄψις μήτε ἀλγηδὼν μηδέ τις ἡδονή, ἀλλ' ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν γίγνηται ἐῷσα χαίρειν τὸ σῶμα, καὶ καθ' ὅσον δύναται μὴ κοινωνοῦσα αὐτῷ μὴδ' ἀπτομένη ὀρέγεται τοῦ ὄντος.

Ἔστι ταῦτα.

And [soul] reasons best, presumably, whenever none of these things bothers it, neither hearing nor sight nor pain, nor any pleasure either, but whenever it comes to be alone by itself as far as possible, disregarding the body, and whenever, having the least possible communion and contact with it, it strives for reality.

That is so (tr. Gallop).

Since this independent reflection of the soul is characterised as philosophical contemplation, the practice of philosophy is identified as the detachment of soul from the influence and concerns of the body. Kenneth Dorter rightly points out that such philosophical 'detachment' 'comes about by means of our perceiving the permanent within the transitory' (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 28). The idea of the soul 'disregarding' (ἐῷσα χαίρειν)²⁷⁷ the body is developed into a picture of physical separation, as the soul 'avoids association with the body' (μὴ κοινωνοῦσα, 65c8; οὐδὲν κοινωνοῦσα, 80e) and even 'flees away' from it (φεύγει ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, 65d1; φεύγουσα, 80e4), and as philosophy becomes the act of 'separating' soul from body (τὸ χωρίζειν . . . ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν (67c6-7). In contrast, when the soul is affected by physical con-

opinion and knowledge in Plato's *Theaetetus*'; J.M. Cooper, 'Plato on sense-perception and knowledge (*Theaetetus* 184-186)'; G. Fine, 'Knowledge and belief in *Republic* V' and 'Knowledge and belief in *Republic* VI-VII'; and J.T. Bedu-Addo, 'Sense-experience and the argument for recollection in Plato's *Phaedo*. On the Parmenidean background to Plato, see Cornford, 'Parmenides' two ways' and *Plato and Parmenides*; Vlastos, 'Parmenides' theory of knowledge'; Kahn, 'The thesis of Parmenides'; and Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides*.

²⁷⁷ The personification of soul effected by the anthropomorphism of such terms as ἐῷσα χαίρειν and παραλυπῇ is at work throughout the *Phdo.* and is accentuated in passages such as 79c7-8 where the body causes the soul to 'wander' (πλανάται) and become 'confused (ταράττεται) and dizzy (ἐλιγγιᾷ) as if drunk (ὥσπερ μεθύουσα)'.

cerns, this is 'association' with the body (συνουσία, 81b; ὁμιλία τε καὶ συνουσία, 81c5). Plato also introduces into this picture of union and separation metaphors of emotional closeness and distance, so that when soul 'associates' with body, it no longer 'despises' the body (ἀτιμάζει, 65d1) but at these times 'has served and loved it and been bewitched by it' (θεραπεύουσα καὶ ἐρώσα καὶ γοητευομένη ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, 81b2-3).²⁷⁸ The physical separation metaphor is continued at 79c-d as the soul that contemplates without the body is said to 'pass' (οἶχεται, d1) into the immortal realm, whereas the soul that relies on sense-perception is described as 'dragged by the body' (ἔλκεται ὑπὸ τοῦ σώματος, c6) into the phenomenal world.

The idea of philosophical contemplation effecting a separation of soul and body is further developed in the *Phaedo* through the metaphors of purification and imprisonment, both of which offer compelling reasons why the soul should be removed from the influence of the body.

2. Corruption and Purification

The image of corruption and purification is introduced with the striking idea that through association with the body soul is 'mixed together' (συνμειγνυμένη, 66b5) with evil. The body is presented as an evil substance which can infect the person. If human beings become infected with body (ἀναμιμνῶμεθα, 67a5), they ought to try to purify themselves from it (καθαρεύομεν, 67a5). At 67c5 purification (κάθαρσις) is said to consist in separating the soul as far as possible from the body, and at 67d9 this process is identified as the practice of philosophy.²⁷⁹ Philosophy purifies the soul of the taint of the body, and at 80e-81c Socrates tells of the afterlife experiences of both the 'purified' and 'tainted' souls.

²⁷⁸ On Plato's presentation of soul's attachment to body in the *Phdo.*, see Price, *MC*, p. 38: 'The bad soul loves the body (81b3, cf. 83d6) . . . , it falls for it like a man for his mistress, so that, after death, it remains "in a state of desire for the body" and still hovers around it (108a7-b1)'.

²⁷⁹ Plato adopted the idea of purification from earlier religious beliefs and shaped it to his own views, as Rohde explains (p. 471): 'Plato often speaks of the κάθαρσις, the purification, after which man must strive . . . He takes both the words and the idea from the theologians, but he gives it a higher meaning, while yet preserving unmistakeably the analogy with the κάθαρσις of the *theologi* and mystery-priests. It is no longer the pollution from the δαίμονες that is to be avoided, but rather the dulling of the power of knowledge . . . due to the world of the senses. Man's effort must be directed not so much to ritual purity, as to the preservation of his knowledge of the eternal from eclipse through the deceptive illusions of the senses; its withdrawal from contact with the ephemeral as the source of pollution and debasement. Thus even in this philosophical reinterpretation of ritual abstinence in terms of spiritual release and emancipation, the effort after "purity" retains its religious sense. The world of the Ideas, the world of pure Being, to which only the pure soul can attain, is a world of divinity.' On the significance of purification in Plato, see also Robinson, *Plato's Psychology* (p. 24), and Dorter, *Plato's Phaedo* (pp. 14, 32, 64-9, 79-82, 173-5 and 177-8). On purification in early Greek religion, see R. Parker, *Miasma*. For Parker's comments on purification in Plato, see ch. 10 'Purity and salvation' (esp. pp. 281-3).

If a soul is 'pure' (καθαρά, 80e2) and not 'dragging along' (συνεφέλκουσα) anything of the body, it departs (ἀπέρχεται, 81a5) to the invisible and immortal realm. But if at the time of death a soul is 'tainted and impure' (μεμιασμένη καὶ ἀκάθαρτος, 81b1), its fate is very different. Such an impure soul is one that has not been purified by philosophy. This is a soul that has maintained constant association with the body and so now is διελημμένην . . . ὑπὸ τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς (81c4, ('interspersed with a corporeal element', tr. Gallop).²⁸⁰ The corporeal is described as 'ponderous, heavy, earthy and seen' (ἐμβριθές, βαρὺ, γεῶδες, ὁρατόν, 81c8-9) and so the soul that is interspersed with such a nature is markedly different from soul in its natural state, which is divine and invisible (see 79b, 80a). Contamination by the body is a very serious threat to the soul's existence as soul and prevents it from departing to its natural 'home' in the invisible realm (81c9-d1):

ὁ δὲ καὶ ἔχουσα ἢ τοιαύτη ψυχὴ βαρύνεται²⁸¹ τε καὶ ἔλκεται πάλιν εἰς τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον φόβῳ τοῦ αἰδοῦς τε καὶ Ἄιδου, ὥσπερ λέγεται, περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους κυλινδουμένη²⁸²

and thus encumbered, such a soul is weighed down, and dragged back into the region of the seen, through fear of the invisible and of Hades; and it roams among tombs and graves, so it is said (tr. Gallop).

Such an impure soul is forced to wander about these places as a punishment until it is once more attached to a body, which will infect it with still further impurity. Thus the impure soul becomes lost in the cycle of rebirths and the only escape is to turn to philosophy with her offer of 'liberation and purification' (λύσει τε καὶ καθαμῶ, 82d6).

Plato's idea that contact with the body taints and infects the soul is found in many passages throughout the dialogues (see appendix 2) and offers a strikingly negative picture of the soul/body relationship. However, on occasion this idea of corruption is developed in further malign detail, which gives rise to other graphic metaphors of degeneration and decay. One of the most memorable visions of the impure soul is that given at *Republic* 611c-612a. Here Socrates tells how it is impossible to discern the true nature of soul while it is joined with the body, and describes the soul as 'maimed'

²⁸⁰ This idea is echoed at 83d10 with the description of the soul as 'full of' or 'saturated with' the body: τοῦ σώματος ἀναπλέα. Dorter rightly observes (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 80) that this 'corporeal stain' is an image of the 'fear of the invisible'.

²⁸¹ At 81c8-9 corporeal nature is described as 'ponderous' (ἐμβριθές) and 'heavy' (βαρὺ) and thus its contamination of soul results in the soul being 'weighed down' (ψυχὴ βαρύνεται) at c19. The idea that moral failing causes the soul to be weighed down, and that life in the body reinforces this weight, is also used at *Phdr.* 248c7-8 (see discussion above, 5.II.2 *Wings*) and at *Rep.* 519b1 where the soul is said to have 'leaden weights' (τὰς μολυβδίδας) attached to it as a result of birth and life in the body — weights which are the result of the desires, occasioned by the body, for 'food, pleasures and gluttonies' (ἐδωδαῖς, ἡδοναῖς, λιχνείαις).

²⁸² The soul that is contaminated by the body suffers the experience of 'rolling'. For my discussion of rolling as a form of disorderly motion indicating irrationality, see 'Plato's moving *logos*'. See also note 254 above on rolling in *Phdr.*

or 'mutilated' (λελωβημένον) by its association with the body. He tells how the 'pure' (καθαρόν) soul is far more beautiful than the impure and likens the soul in its bodily frame to the sea-god Glaucus, whose original appearance is spoiled by his life in the sea. The limbs of this god are 'broken off' (ἐκκεκλάσθαι), 'crushed' (συντετριφθαι) and 'altogether maimed' (πάντως λελωβῆσθαι) by the waves, and his appearance is further distorted by the shells and seaweed that have attached themselves to him, to the extent that he now looks more like a 'monster' (θηρίω). The sea image is continued as Socrates asks Glaucón to imagine how the soul might be, if it could orient itself towards the divine and so be raised up 'from the sea' (ἐκ τοῦ πόντου). In this passage Plato packs together metaphors of height/depth, movement, nourishment, communion/separation with those of corruption/purification to express more vividly the impact of philosophy on the soul:

καὶ ἐννοεῖν ὧν ἅπτεται καὶ οἷων ἐφίεται ὁμιλιῶν, ὥς συγγενῆς οὖσα τῷ τε θεῷ καὶ ἀθανάτῳ καὶ τῷ αἰεὶ ὄντι, καὶ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο τῷ τοιούτῳ πᾶσα ἐπισπομένη καὶ ὑπὸ ταύτης τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκκομισθεῖσα ἐκ τοῦ πόντου ἐν ᾧ νῦν ἐστίν, καὶ περικρουσθεῖσα πέτρας τε καὶ ὄστρεα ἃ νῦν αὐτῇ, ἅτε γῆν ἐστιωμένη,²⁸³ γεγῆρα καὶ πετρώδη πολλὰ καὶ ἄγρια περιπέφυκεν ὑπὸ τῶν εὐδαιμόνων λεγομένων ἐστιάσεων.

... and [we should] consider what it is related to and the affiliations it desires, given that it is of the same order as the divine, immortal, and eternal realm. And we should consider what would happen to the mind if the *whole* of it allowed this realm to dictate its direction, and if this impulse carried it out of its current underwater location, and all the stones and shells were broken off — all the accretions of earth and rock (since earth is its food) which currently grow uncontrollably in large numbers all over it because it indulges in pleasures which men say bring happiness (tr. Waterfield).

This remarkable passage presents, among other images, a picture of the soul as spoiled and disfigured by its life in the body. Like Glaucus the soul is encrusted and covered in accretions as a result of its environment, and only philosophy, which fosters close association with the divine, has the power to restore it to its former pristine condition.

3. Imprisonment and Release

Plato offers a further account of the harmful effects of body on soul through the metaphor of imprisonment whereby the soul is a prisoner, chained in the body and so separated from the outside world. In the *Phaedo* the image of imprisonment is closely related to the more neutral idea of the binding of soul in (or to) the body, and often it

²⁸³ The idea that the soul 'consumes' certain kinds of 'food' is used in various passages in the dialogues, see appendix 2. The metaphor of the soul's food is perhaps linked with the metaphor of the purification of the soul through the idea of purification as a purging of unwanted, waste substances, see *Soph.* 227c-230c.

is impossible to discriminate between the type of binding that is being suggested — the binding of a physical object or the shackling of a person. This ambiguity can be seen, for example, at 67d1 where purification is said to separate the soul from the body so that it is ἐκλυομένην ὥσπερ [ἐκ] δεσμών ἐκ τοῦ σώματος ('freed as it were from the bonds of the body').²⁸⁴ It is only at 82e-83d that the metaphor of binding refers unequivocally to a person and even here it is used alongside metaphors for the attachment of physical objects.

At 82d9-e5 Socrates begins to explain how philosophy frees the soul from the influence of the body:

γινώσκουσι γάρ, ἡ δ' ὅς, οἱ φιλομαθεῖς ὅτι παραλαβοῦσα αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἢ φιλοσοφία ἀτεχνῶς διαδεδεμένην ἐν τῷ σώματι καὶ προσκεκολλημένην, ἀναγκαζομένην δὲ ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ διὰ τούτου σκοπεῖσθαι τὰ ὄντα ἀλλὰ μὴ αὐτὴν δι' αὐτῆς, καὶ ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην.

Lovers of knowledge recognize that when philosophy takes their soul in hand, it has been veritably bound and glued to the body, and is forced to view things as if through a prison, rather than alone by itself; and that it is wallowing in utter ignorance (tr. Gallop).

The metaphor of bonds is first introduced here with the participle διαδεδεμένην (bound on either side, bound fast). The verb διαδέω can refer both to the binding of objects and the chaining of prisoners and so at this stage the actual nature of the soul's bondage is still ambiguous. However, with the participle προσκεκολλημένην ('glued on or to') the image shifts squarely into that of an inanimate object.²⁸⁵ It is only with the simile ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ ('as if through a prison') that the soul is unambiguously presented as a human prisoner. The idea that the soul is 'glued' to the body is unusual and prepares the way for the equally surprising metaphors of 'pinning' and 'riveting' at 83d (to be discussed below). These three metaphors clash with the idea of a personified soul and indeed seem designed to do so. The dominant image of the soul in the *Phaedo* is that of an inner person, and for an audience accustomed to this image the idea of the soul being 'glued' or 'nailed' to the body is disconcerting. Since Plato has made it clear that the soul is the natural master of the body (*Phaedo* 80a), the body's influence on soul is, for him, contrary to the natural order. These inanimate metaphors, which present the soul/body union in terms of carpentry, thus throw into

²⁸⁴ See also 65a1 (ἀπολύων), 67d4 and 67d9 (λύσις) where the general notion of 'release' could refer to an object or a person.

²⁸⁵ Tredennick interprets both διαδεδεμένην and προσκεκολλημένην as referring to a person and translates: 'Every seeker after wisdom knows that up to the time when philosophy takes it over his soul is a helpless prisoner chained hand and foot in the body'. While διαδεδεμένην could refer to a person, the same is not true of προσκεκολλημένην. Thus Tredennick's translation of προσκεκολλημένην as 'chained hand and foot' is not acceptable and obscures Plato's calculated shifts in this passage between inanimate and animate imagery.

relief the unnaturalness of the situation where the body influences the soul and so convey Plato's horror at the soul's plight.

But after introducing the image of soul as an inanimate object glued to the body, why does Plato then switch again to a personified soul in the simile of imprisonment (ὥσπερ διὰ εἰργμοῦ)? The answer is that, apart from the rhetorical capital to be gained from the human prisoner idea, he is about to speak of the soul as 'inquiring' (σκοπεῖσθαι), which sits rather uneasily with the depiction of soul as a piece of wood (or whatever) stuck to the body in some act of demiurgic creation. But in addition to the necessity of personification and the rhetorical impact, the image of the soul as a prisoner allows Plato to express other aspects of the soul/body union. The imprisonment image presents the soul as separate from reality and forced to view the Forms not directly but through the body, its prison. Thus the soul becomes a person shut away from the real world and only able to see it by looking out through the prison windows or bars. However, Plato does not actually mention windows or bars and says only that the soul is forced to view reality 'through a prison' (διὰ εἰργμοῦ). Since one strictly cannot 'view' anything 'through' a prison, this idea is a little odd at the level of the vehicle of the image (the prisoner/prison relationship) but makes sense at the level of the tenor (the soul/body relationship), where the inner soul views and judges the outside world literally *through* the body *via* the senses.²⁸⁶ The complex of metaphors and images here illustrates Plato's view that the body is a hindrance to thought: just as the walls or bars of a prison separate the prisoner from the outside world and impair his view of it, so the body separates the soul from the Forms and impairs its view of true reality. In both these ideas separation has a dual effect, emotional and cognitive: first, like the prisoner, the embodied soul is isolated and cut off from the world that is familiar to it and thus suffers the emotional effect of separation; second, just as the prisoner can only look out at the world beyond through the barrier of the prison, so the embodied soul has its view of the real world obscured by the barrier of the body.

The result of the cognitive effect of separation from the reality of the Forms is that the embodied soul 'is rolled around in utter ignorance' (ἐν πάσῃ ἀμαθίᾳ κυλινδουμένην). There is an intriguing contrast in this passage as the fixed condition of the soul, bound in the body, is at odds with the rolling movement that characterises its epistemological weakness. Plato uses this same contrast in other dialogues²⁸⁷ and his aim would seem to be to create a paradox whereby the same entity is both fixed and moving. The point of this paradox is to stress that the cause of the unsteady movement of the soul is precisely its fixed status, as it is trapped in the body. What

²⁸⁶ On the *Phaedo*'s presentation of perception as a process involving body and soul, see Price, *MC*, pp. 36-8.

²⁸⁷ See e.g. the contrast between the fixity of oral discussion and the unsteadiness of books in *Phdr.* 275c-276a. 'Rolling' in the *Phdr.* passage again signifies epistemological uncertainty. M.M. Mackenzie has discussed Plato's use of κυλινδομαι and has rightly concluded that it refers to (p. 73, n.14) 'the inability of belief about the sensible world to be fixedly true or false' ('Paradox in Plato's *Phaedrus*'). I have discussed the contrast between unsteady motion and fixity in the dialogues in 'Plato's moving *logos*'.

from a 'normal' perspective looks to be a cause of fixity for the soul (embodiment) is from a philosophical perspective a cause of unsteadiness (separation from the Forms which impairs reasoning). In this way the image of the bound/imprisoned soul works like that of the soul's home in that it inverts the ordinary, non-philosophical perspective: when the soul is bound in the body, it is not stable but unsteady; when the soul is living in the body, it is not at home but in exile. This picture of the soul bound to the body and rolling around in ignorance recalls the scene at 81d-e, where the lost soul is 'rolled around' (κυλινδουμένη) in graveyards, waiting to be bound again (ἐνδεθῶσιν) into mortal bodies. At 81d-e the soul is freed from the body but is still not settled. Plato's point here is that the experience of a soul in the afterlife mirrors its experience of life in the body: if a soul associates closely with the body in life, it will not be able to leave it at death. In terms of the image of restless motion and stability, the only way for a soul to achieve stability (emotional and cognitive) is through total separation from the body and full contact with the divine Forms.

The imagery of union and separation works to confirm that in Plato's view although the soul is joined with the body in life, it still has some control over the extent of the union. In other words, it can make choices about how far it will associate with the body and how far it will seek independence from it. The metaphor of bonds and imprisonment is used to support this idea: the initial binding of soul to body occurs through the agency of an external force, but once in the body the soul itself can choose to loosen those bonds as far as it can or to reinforce them. Socrates explains (82e5-83a1):

[ἡ φιλοσοφία] καὶ τοῦ εἰργμοῦ τὴν δεινότητα κατιδοῦσα ὅτι δι' ἐπιθυμίας ἐστίν, ὥς ἂν μάλιστα αὐτὸς ὁ δεδεμένος συλλήπτωρ εἰ τοῦ δεδέσθαι.

Now philosophy discerns the cunning of the prison, sees how it is effected through desire, so that the captive himself may co-operate most of all in his imprisonment (tr. Gallop).

Dorter's interpretation of this passage is clear and helpful (*Plato's Phaedo*, p. 80):

This prison represents not merely a confinement in the body (life) . . . but the additional *devotion* to the corporeal at the expense of the spiritual. Our imprisonment is thus a function of our responding to corporeal pleasures and pains, of our nurturing in ourselves corresponding desires and fears, and of our becoming increasingly attached to the visible realm.

In the face of this danger philosophy becomes the agent which tries to loosen the soul rather than allowing it to reinforce its own bonds (83a1-5):

— ὅπερ οὖν λέγω, γινώσκουσιν οἱ φιλομαθεῖς ὅτι οὕτω παραλαβοῦσα ἡ φιλοσοφία ἔχουσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἡρέμα παραμυθεῖται καὶ λύειν ἐπιχειρεῖ, ἐνδεικνυμένη ὅτι ἀπάτης μὲν μεστή διὰ τῶν ὁμμάτων σκέψις, ἀπάτης δὲ ἡ διὰ τῶν ὧτων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων αἰσθήσεων.

As I say, then, lovers of knowledge recognize that their soul is in that state when philosophy takes it in hand, gently reassures it and tries to release it, by showing that inquiry through the eyes is full of deceit, and deceitful too is inquiry through the ears and other senses; (tr. Gallop).

So philosophy tries to 'free' (λύειν) the soul and the means of release is by teaching it that the bodily senses cannot be relied upon to provide knowledge of the truth. The soul can achieve freedom during human life by realising that the evidence of the senses cannot be trusted and thus deciding to rely only on itself. The concept of soul operating as an independent entity while in a human body is difficult to conceive of and express. Plato uses the helpful spatial metaphor of separation to convey his point but even with this he must still work hard to communicate his vision (83a6-b2):

πείθουσα δὲ ἐκ τούτων μὲν ἀναχωρεῖν, ὅσον μὴ ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς χρῆσθαι, αὐτὴν δὲ εἰς αὐτὴν συλλέγεσθαι καὶ ἀθροίζεσθαι παρακελευομένη, πιστεύειν δὲ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἄλλ' ἢ αὐτὴν αὐτῇ, ὅτι ἂν νοήσῃ αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτὴν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ τῶν ὄντων·

and by persuading it [soul] to withdraw from those, so far as it need not use them, and by urging it to collect and gather itself together, and to trust none other but itself, whenever, alone by itself, it thinks of any reality, alone by itself (tr. Gallop).

The remarkable repetition of pronouns in this passage reveals Plato's effort to convey the highly abstract notion of what it is for the soul to exercise pure reason (independent of the corporeal senses) about pure reality (independent of physical nature). In terms of separation imagery, if the soul is to be free, it must withdraw from the body (ἀναχωρεῖν) and collect itself together, as if in its own space. The wonderfully graphic verbs συλλέγεσθαι (come together, assemble) and ἀθροίζεσθαι (gather, crowd together, rally) suggest that the soul is an entity of different parts which can be dispersed or concentrated. These spatial terms do not refer to a process whereby the soul would literally withdraw from the different areas of the body but a process whereby the soul would cease to use the bodily senses and rely on its own rational faculties alone. In this way the soul would 'concentrate' its power and 'collect' itself, with the spatial terms serving as metaphors for the adoption of a particular mental strategy and focus. In terms of the metaphor of imprisonment and freedom, freedom lies in the soul's choice to adopt this independent strategy and imprisonment in its choice to work in close conjunction with the bodily senses, where 'desire' (ἐπιθυμία) reinforces its bonds (82e6).

The idea that the soul has a role in its own imprisonment or freedom is expressed in a slightly different way at 83d4. Here Socrates explains that the force of physical sensations can cause the soul to believe that the body's experience of reality in the phenomenal world is actually the true one (83d1-5):

Οὐκοῦν ἐν τούτῳ τῷ πάθει μάλιστα καταδεῖται ψυχὴ ὑπὸ σώματος;

another in entirely human ways (both physical and verbal), in the next two models animals are introduced — a development that leads to new forms of control and interaction.

2. *Mythological Monster*

Republic IX concludes with an image of the soul that has been described as ‘bizarre’ and as having ‘a visually incoherent, slightly nightmarish quality’.³²² This is the image of the soul as a creature similar to those of ancient legend such as the Chimera, Scylla and Cerberus. Like them, the creature that Socrates presents is single in form but comprises different parts, which clearly represent reason, spirit and the appetites in the soul. Socrates instructs Glaucon to ‘mould’ (πλάττε) this ‘image’ (εἰκόνα), and thus the creature takes shape (588c7-d5):

Πλάττε τοίνυν μίαν μὲν ιδέαν θηρίου ποικίλου καὶ πολυκεφάλου, ἡμέρων δὲ θηρίων ἔχοντος κεφαλὰς κύκλῳ καὶ ἀγρίων, καὶ δυνατοῦ μεταβάλλειν καὶ φύειν ἐξ αὐτοῦ πάντα ταῦτα. [. . .]

Μίαν δὴ τοίνυν ἄλλην ιδέαν λέοντος, μίαν δὲ ἀνθρώπου· πολὺ δὲ μέγιστον ἔστω τὸ πρῶτον καὶ δεύτερον τὸ δεύτερον.

Make a model, then, of a creature with a single — if varied and many-headed — form, arrayed all round with the heads of both wild and tame animals, and possessing the ability to change over to a different set of heads and to generate all these new bits from its own body. [. . .]

A lion and a man are the next two models to make, then. The first of the models, however, is to be by far the largest, and the second the second largest.

Socrates next requests Glaucon to ‘model around’ (περίπλασον) these parts the appearance of being one, so that from the outside the creature seems to be uniform — a man (588e).

Thus the appetites in the soul are presented as a huge, multiform beast with both wild and tame heads; the spirit becomes a lion; and reason an inner man — with the three parts encased in human form. Of the three parts of the soul two are depicted as animals and only one human. For Plato human beings have a superior nature to animals,³²³ and so the use of human and animal forms for the parts of the soul symbolises the ‘natural’ hierarchy that exists between them. Also, it is appropriate that the part of the soul which loves reasoning is portrayed as a human being whose ability to reason marks him off from the animals.³²⁴ In terms of size, this model depicts reason as the

³²² Annas, *IPR*, p. 319.

³²³ See e.g. *Polit.* 271e.

³²⁴ Also, by presenting reason as a little man within, Plato reinforces a point he makes elsewhere, namely (Annas, *IPR*, p. 319): ‘that reason’s interests are those of the whole, that developing one’s whole self with all its capacities is identifying with one’s rational desires’.

smallest part, with spirit larger and with the appetites the largest of all.³²⁵ That reason is the smallest part helps to convey how difficult it is for it to establish, and then maintain, control over the other two. In his discussion of how human behaviour affects the power struggle in the soul, Plato further exploits this idea of intrinsic inequality between the soul's parts.

At 588e the image of soul as a mythological creature is used to reinforce the message of book IX that injustice does not benefit a person. Here Socrates views the effects of injustice from the perspective of the power-relations between the man, lion and many-headed beast, and argues that defending injustice amounts to lending support to a situation where the man within is rendered weak and useless (588e3-89a4):

Λέγωμεν δὴ τῷ λέγοντι ὡς λυσιτελεῖ τούτῳ ἀδικεῖν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, δίκαια δὲ πράττειν οὐ συμφέρει, ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φησὶν ἢ λυσιτελεῖν αὐτῷ τὸ παντοδαπὸν θηρίον εὐωχοῦντι ποιεῖν ἰσχυρὸν καὶ τὸν λέοντα καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν λέοντα, τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον λιμοκτονεῖν καὶ ποιεῖν ἀσθενή, ὥστε ἔλκεσθαι ὅπῃ ἂν ἐκείνων ὁπότερον ἄγῃ, καὶ μηδὲν ἕτερον ἑτέρῳ συνεθίζειν μηδὲ φίλον ποιεῖν, ἀλλ' ἔαν αὐτὰ ἐν αὐτοῖς δάκνεσθαι τε καὶ μαχόμενα ἐσθίειν ἀλλήλα.

Now, we'd better respond to the idea that this person gains from doing wrong, and loses from doing right, by pointing out to its proponent that this is tantamount to saying that we're rewarded if we indulge and strengthen the many-sided beast and the lion with all its aspects, but starve and weaken the man until he's subject to the whims of others, and can't promote familiarity and compatibility between the other two, but lets them bite each other, fight, and try to eat each other.

The rhetorical force of this vivid image derives from the macabre predicament of the human being in the soul, outnumbered and overwhelmed by wild animals who would drag him around at their will. In any event, the odds are against the man being able to control the other two creatures,³²⁶ and Socrates maintains that the effect of injustice is to reduce further the human being's chances, since it not only makes him physically weaker, but also makes the beasts stronger. The argument at work in this passage is that, since it can hardly benefit someone to have a soul in such a chaotic state, and since injustice is the direct cause of this chaos, injustice cannot benefit a person — an argument Glaucon accepts. As in the state model, the three parts of the soul are envisaged as in conflict, each trying to achieve control over the others. But here the nature of the conflict is different, as is the way that control and authority can be won.

³²⁵ This is in line with *Rep.* 442a where the ἐπιθυμητικόν is said to be the largest (πλεῖστον) part of the soul.

³²⁶ See Moline, 'Complexity', p. 13: 'He tells us that it is the task of this tiny human being to tame and rule the other two beasts with which it is caged. But having depicted them as powerful beasts he makes one wonder how on his view one might tame and rule them. Indeed, he makes one wonder whether justice in the psyche, so conceived, is possible at all.'

The first metaphor is that of physical strength and weakness caused by diet. The person is spoken of as able to ‘feed well, feast’ (εὖωχοῦντι) or ‘starve’ (λιμοκτονεῖν) the different parts of his soul and thereby to make them ‘strong’ (ισχυρόν) or ‘weak’ (ἀσθενή). The different strengths of the animal parts and the human part are then portrayed in appropriate ways. The multiform beast and lion are the physically stronger parts in this scenario and are imagined as wielding their power over the man by ‘leading’ (ἄγη) and ‘dragging’ (ἐλκεσθαι) him along. The struggle between the animals themselves is equally physical but far more gruesome. They are imagined as ‘biting’ (δάκνεσθαι) and ‘fighting’ (μαχόμενα) each other, and it seems that the winner of this struggle would be whichever beast succeeded in actually ‘devouring’ (ἐσθίειν) the other one. The inner man’s control over the animals is presented in quite a different way, since his power is that of ‘accustoming’ (συνεθίζειν) one to the other and ‘making them friendly’ (φίλον ποιεῖν). When Socrates turns to the competing claim that justice is to our advantage, he depicts the control of reason in more detail (589a6-b6):

Οὐκοῦν αὖ ὁ τὰ δίκαια λέγων λυσιτελεῖν φαίη ἂν δεῖν ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ ταῦτα λέγειν, ὅθεν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ἐντὸς ἄνθρωπος ἔσται ἐγκρατέστατος, καὶ τοῦ πολυκεφάλου θρέμματος ἐπιμελήσεται ὥσπερ γεωργός, τὰ μὲν ἡμερα τρέφων καὶ τιθασεύων, τὰ δὲ ἄγρια ἀποκωλύων φύεσθαι, σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος τὴν τοῦ λέοντος φύσιν, καὶ κοινῇ πάντων κηδόμενος, φίλα ποιησάμενος ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ αὐτῷ, οὕτω θρέψει;

So the alternative position, that morality is profitable, is equivalent to saying that our words and behaviour should be designed to maximise the control the inner man has within us, and should enable him to secure the help of the leonine quality and then tend to the many-headed beast as a farmer tends to his crops — by nurturing them and cultivating its tame aspects, and by stopping the wild ones growing. Then he can ensure that they’re all compatible with one another, and with himself, and can look after them all equally, without favouritism.

Thus justice or morality will lead to a situation where the inner man will be the ‘strongest’ (ἐγκρατέστατος) element in the soul, which will allow him to impose his own particular form of authority over the other two. The inner man ‘cares for’ (κηδόμενος) the others and his victory does not consist in rendering the beasts helpless, or killing them, but in nurturing them (τρέφων, θρέψει) and making them ‘friendly’ (φίλα) with each other and with him. The idea that the parts of the soul can be friendly also appears in an earlier passage (442c), where, in the context of the state model, Socrates posits the view of moderation as ‘friendship and harmony’ (τῇ φιλίᾳ καὶ συμφωνίᾳ) in the soul.

As he nurtures and fosters the two beasts (589a-b) the inner man responds to their individual natures and treats each one differently. He cultivates the tame aspects of the

many-headed beast and suppresses the wild. This beast has a ring of animal heads, some of which are tame (ἡμέρων), others wild (ἀγρίων), and he is able to grow these out of himself seemingly at will (588c). These heads represent various desires:³²⁷ the wild ones those which are unnecessary and harmful; the tame ones those which are necessary and therefore acceptable. Thus, as he seeks to make the beast friendly, he ‘domesticates’ (τιθασεύων) the tame heads and ‘prevents the growth’ (ἀποκωλύων φύεσθαι) of the wild. The simile of the farmer (ὥσπερ γεωργός) can suggest equally the tendance of both animals and crops,³²⁸ and Plato’s terms — ἡμερα (‘tame, cultivated’), ἀγρια (‘wild’) and τιθασεύων (‘tame, domesticate, cultivate’) — seem carefully chosen to allow both images to resonate. As Adam observes,³²⁹ the plant image here is similar to that at *Euthyphro* 2d, where the training of the young is likened to a farmer’s care for tender shoots. The opposition between wild and tame is used again at 589d1-3 as Socrates suggests that ‘beautiful traditions’ are those which ‘enslave’ (δουλούμενα) the ‘beastlike’ (τὰ θηριώδη) parts of our nature to the human, while the ‘ugly traditions’ are those which enslave the ‘tame’ (ἡμερον) part to the ‘wild’ (ἀγρίῳ). The metaphor of enslavement, which also appears at other points in the mythological creature model,³³⁰ is an echo of the state model of earlier books.³³¹

As the inner man seeks to make the lion friendly, he takes account of the creature’s own nature, as he did in the case of the many-headed beast. The lion, with its proverbially courageous nature, represents the θυμοειδές, the spirited element in the soul which has courage as its associated virtue. In the state model of soul the θυμοειδές is represented by the class of soldiers, the class displaying bravery, and here the two images of the lion and soldiers are fused as the inner man is said, in a direct echo of 441e (συμμάχῳ), to ‘make an ally’ (σύμμαχον ποιησάμενος) of the lion. In view of the lion’s courage, it is appropriate that the inner man should not ‘tame’ it but rather use its strength in his own cause. Further, given the parallel between the courage of the lion and that of the soldierly class, it is fitting that the notion of ‘friendship’ between the man and the lion should be portrayed as a military alliance.

At 590a-c Socrates gives an account of various vices in terms of the mythological creature model and uses a number of new metaphors for the soul’s parts and the ways they interact. The first vice discussed is licentiousness (590a5-8):

Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ ἀκολασταίνειν οἷσι διὰ τοιαῦτα πάλαι ψέγεσθαι, ὅτι ἀνίεται ἐν τῷ τοιοῦτῳ τὸ δεινόν, τὸ μέγα ἐκεῖνο καὶ πολυειδές θρέμμα, πέρα τοῦ δέοντος;

Δῆλον, ἔφη.

³²⁷ See Waterfield’s useful note (*ad loc.*) on this distinction between the wild and tame heads.

³²⁸ Grube in his translation maintains the idea of animals (‘as a farmer looks after his animals’), while Shorey develops the plant image (‘like a farmer who cherishes and trains the cultivated plants but checks the growth of the wild’).

³²⁹ J. Adam on *Rep. ad loc.* (p. 364).

³³⁰ 589d7, 589e2, 589e5, 590c9, 590d2, 590e3, 591a2 and 591b3.

³³¹ See e.g. 442b, 444b, 553d, 561c, 574d and 577c-d.

Now, do you think the reason for the traditional condemnation of licentiousness is the same — because it allows that fiend, that huge and many-faceted creature, greater freedom than it should have?

‘Obviously,’ he said.

The verb ἀνίημι has several meanings including ‘let go, set free; loosen, unfasten; slacken, relax’. Taken with θρέμμα (creature) the verb requires the sense of ‘let go, set free’ in order to create the image of an untethered beast. However, the verb has to be taken in its other sense of ‘slacken, relax’ a little later (590b3), which provides an interesting change of image. At 590a9-b1 Socrates deals with the vices of obstinacy and irritability:

Ἡ δ' αὐθάδεια καὶ δυσκολία ψέγεται οὐχ ὅταν τὸ λεοντώδες τε καὶ ὄφειώδες³³² αὔξηται καὶ συντείνεται ἀναρμόστως;

Πάνυ μὲν οὖν.

And aren't obstinacy and bad temper considered bad because they distend and invigorate our leonine, serpentine side to a disproportionate extent?

Yes.

The metaphor of growth and enlargement introduced by the verb αὔξηται ('is increased') fits with the earlier metaphor of the size of the different parts of the soul (588d), and those of feeding (588e) and fostering (589b). Waterfield, changing the sentence structure from passive to active, renders the verbs αὔξηται ('is increased') and συντείνεται ('is strained') as 'distend and invigorate'. In Waterfield's translation 'invigorate' specifies the Greek verb's sense of 'increase in power' rather than 'increase in size' (although the two often go hand-in-hand) and 'distend' would seem to be an attempt to render both the tension inherent in the idea of 'straining' and a concomitant idea of an increase in size, which Waterfield reinforces with his translation of the adverb ἀναρμόστως as 'to a disproportionate extent'. Similarly, Grube translates the phrase as 'increased and stretched disproportionately' but these translations are not quite accurate. For while the English 'distend' and 'stretch' denote extension and expansion, the Greek verb συντείνω means 'strain, draw tight, brace up' and thus denotes contraction and drawing together. Also, while the adverb ἀναρμόστως ('unfittingly') would allow the translation 'disproportionately', the word is often used in the context of music and sound where it means 'discordantly, inharmoniously'. Thus when συντείνω appears with ἀναρμόστως (590b1) and is closely followed by the idea of 'slackening' (τῇ χαλάσει, 590b3), the metaphor at work would seem to be a musical one, involving the tightening and slackening of an instrument's strings. Thus Socrates is speaking of the parts of the soul as musical strings that

³³² On the introduction of the 'snakelike' part, Adam comments (pp. 365-6): 'The serpentine element has not hitherto been mentioned, but . . . may well be included in τὰ περὶ τὸν λέοντα 588E. It symbolises some meaner forms of the θυμοειδές which cannot well be attributed to the king of beasts, e.g. δυσκολία . . . , perfidiousness etc.'

can be 'tightened' or 'slackened' and these different states are linked with virtue and vice, as cowardice is presented as the 'slackening' (τῇ χαλάσει) and 'relaxing' (ἀνέσει) of the θυμοειδές. The noun ἀνεσις is the technical term for the tuning of strings³³³ and the parts of the soul have already been spoken of in these musical terms in book IV (ἐπιτείνουσα, 441e9; ἀνείσα, 442a1), in the context of the idea of the 'harmony' of the soul.³³⁴ The notions of 'tightening' and 'slackening' at 590a-b may also refer to mental tension and relaxation,³³⁵ and in this general sense would form a bridge with the imagery of calming and pacifying at 591b2-3, where the animal element of the soul is spoken of as 'put to sleep' (κομίζεται) and 'pacified' (ήμεροῦται).

At 590b6 Socrates deals with the vices of flattery and meanness and uses further metaphors for the power relations in the soul. In this passage a person (τις) is imagined as 'subordinating' (ὑπὸ . . . ποιῆ) his spirited element to 'the mob-like beast' (τῷ ὀχλώδει θηρίῳ)³³⁶ and as accustoming it to be an ape instead of a lion (ἀντὶ λέοντος πίθηκον). The ape adds to the family of animals in the soul (which is presumably meant to be humorous) and would seem to be an image of buffoonery and ridiculous behaviour.³³⁷ In thus transforming the character of the spirited element from a 'lion' to an 'ape' and in subordinating it to the 'mob-like beast' of the appetites, the person as a whole is presented as able to exert a direct influence on the nature of, and situation in, his soul.

In the next section of the passage Socrates again uses the idea of interaction in the soul to explain why manual labour is reproached (590c2):

Βαναυσία δὲ καὶ χειροτεχνία διὰ τί οἶει ὄνειδος φέρει; ἢ δι' ἄλλο τι φήσομεν ἢ ὅταν τις ἀσθενὲς φύσει ἔχη τὸ τοῦ βελτίστου εἶδος, ὥστε μὴ ἂν δύνασθαι ἄρχειν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ θρεμμάτων, ἀλλὰ θεραπεύειν ἐκεῖνα, καὶ τὰ θωπεύματα αὐτῶν μόνον δύνηται μανθάνειν;

What about mundane, manual labour? Why do you think it has a bad name? Isn't it precisely because there's an inherent weakness in the truly good part of the person which makes him incapable of controlling his internal beasts, so that all he does is pander to them, and all he can learn is their whims?

³³³ See e.g. *Rep.* 349e2.

³³⁴ See e.g. *συνάδοντας* (432a3), *συμφωνίαν* (432a8), *σύμφωνα* (441e9), *ἁρμονία τε καὶ ῥυθμῷ* (442a2) and *συναρμόσαντα . . . ἁρμονίας* (443d5-6). For other uses of the metaphor of harmony within the soul, see appendix 2.

³³⁵ The idea of 'tightening' (*συντείνω*) is used for the rousing of soul at *Laws* 800d3.

³³⁶ The language at 590b7-9 echoes earlier passages on the soul in *Rep.*: *ὀχλώδει* (moblike) echoes the state model with its comparison of the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* to the lower classes; *προπηλακίζομενον* recalls the abusive behaviour of the boastful discourses at 560d4 (*προπηλακίζοντες*) and *ἀπληστίας* echoes the use of *ἀπληστότατον* for the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* at 442a7; *ἀπληστία* is also used in the comparison between soul and sieve at *Gorg.* 493b3.

³³⁷ See *Rep.* 620c.

As Socrates makes his (untenable) connection between manual labour and a weak reason, he uses again the metaphors both of physical strength/weakness and of ruling for the exercise of power within the soul. New metaphors in this passage are those of the weak inner man 'conciliating' (θεραπεύειν) and 'learning flatteries' (θωπεύματα . . . μανθάνειν) for the beasts within. Since θωπεύω can mean both 'flatter' and 'caress, pat', the man within can be seen as using both verbal compliments and physical caresses to win over the beasts.

Thus in the model of the soul as a mythological creature Plato develops a number of different metaphors for the interaction and exercise of power within the soul. These metaphors are of two main types: those that convey the whole person's influence on their soul and those that detail the inner struggles and contacts between the three parts of the soul. At the level of the whole human being, the person is spoken of as 'feeding' and 'starving' the different parts, as tuning them to the correct pitch, like musical strings, as 'subordinating' or 'enslaving' one part to another and as accustoming them to behave in certain ways. Fine or base traditions exert a direct influence on the soul by enslaving or liberating the different parts, and punishment is said both to 'calm down' the wild and to 'free' the tame aspects of the soul. At the level of inner relations, the parts of the soul are depicted as of different sizes and strengths. When the animals are stronger than the inner man, they 'drag' him around, and their struggle with each other is that of wild beasts, biting, fighting and devouring each other. However, when the man (reason) is the strongest part of the soul, he exercises a civilising influence, nurturing the animals and making them friendly. The political metaphors of ruling, making alliances, enslaving and liberating also feature in the activities of the inner soul, and a new twist is added when the weak ruler resorts to conciliation and flattery to keep control. To sum up: in this model Plato combines language of physical and political power, of training animals, cultivating plants and tuning strings in a musical instrument. The mixture of human and animal forms in the mythological creature gives rise to the different metaphors of human and animal behaviour — some of which also feature in the next model, as the charioteer of the soul attempts to control his team of horses.

3. Charioteer and Horses

Plato's account of the struggle in the soul and his development of the charioteer and horses image in the myth of the *Phaedrus* have been carefully analysed by various critics.³³⁸ My particular concern is with the various metaphors for interaction and power-relations between the soul's parts that are presented within this model. It is generally accepted that the figures of the charioteer and good and bad horses correspond at least approximately to the reasoning, spirited and appetitive parts of the soul

³³⁸ See esp. Ferrari, *Cicadas*, pp. 185-203. Price's analysis of mental conflict in Plato also offers a very perceptive account of the significance of the imagery of the *Phdr.* (MC, pp. 74-82).

as set out in *Republic*.³³⁹ A key difference between the two accounts of tripartition is that whereas in the *Republic* conflict in the soul is considered from a general perspective, in the *Phaedrus* the particular perspective is that of the experience of love and sexual desire.

In the *Phaedrus* the charioteer and horses model portrays the response of different parts of the soul to the impulse of love. As noted in Chapter 5, in his choice of this model Plato may have been inspired by the chariot and horse imagery of Greek erotic poetry.³⁴⁰ Through the figures and respective behaviour of the charioteer and his horses, Plato opens up the soul of the lover to reveal how the three parts within react to the sight of the beloved. In this context the struggle is primarily between reason and appetites, and for the most part the spirited element supports reason.³⁴¹ The appetites, represented by the bad horse, want simply to enjoy sexual intercourse with the boy (throughout this model the parts of the soul are spoken of as relating directly to the beloved). But the charioteer (reason) desires a more spiritual and sustained love affair where beauty and love awaken the soul's memory of the Forms and so spur the lovers on to philosophical lives — which brings rewards both in this life and in the afterlife (256a-7a). In the story of how the charioteer in the soul of the philosophic lover finally subdues the bad horse and its lustful desires, Plato uses various metaphors for the interaction between the soul's parts and for the exercise of power. Essentially, there are two groups of metaphors in this model: those which portray the struggle strictly in terms of a charioteer's attempt to control his horses and those which present both charioteer and horses acting and reacting in human ways.

In his myth Socrates begins his account of the conflict in the soul with a detailed description of both horses (253d-e).³⁴² As Ferrari observes, these descriptions are heavily caricatured (*Cicadas*, p. 185) and indeed 'rather vaudevillian' (p. 200). On the matter of obedience to the charioteer, the good horse is described as ἀπληκτος ('needing no whip') and is said to 'respond to the spoken command alone' (κελεύσματος μόνον καὶ λόγῳ ἡνιοχεῖται), whereas the bad horse is described as μάστιγι μετὰ κέντρων μόγις ὑπέικων ('hardly yielding to the whip and goad together'). The bad horse is also said to be πολὺς ('large, gross') — a point which ac-

³³⁹ See e.g. Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 185; Hackforth, *Plato's Phaedrus*, p. 72; Guthrie, 'Plato's views on the nature of soul', p. 234; Linforth, p. 299; McGibbon, p. 56. See also Robinson, *Plato's Psychology*, pp. 117 and 123.

³⁴⁰ See 5.II.2 on wings.

³⁴¹ On the role of the good horse, see Robinson, *Plato's Psychology*, p. 117 and Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 192.

³⁴² Rowe's translation captures Plato's exaggerated contrast between the two: 'the first of the two, which is on the nobler side, is erect in form and clean-limbed, high-necked, nose somewhat hooked, white in colour, with black eyes, a lover of honour when joined with restraint and a sense of shame, and a companion of true glory, needing no whip, responding to the spoken command alone; the other is crooked in shape, gross, a random collection of parts, with a short, powerful neck, flat-nosed, black-skinned, grey-eyed, bloodshot, companion of excess and boastfulness, shaggy around the ears, deaf, hardly yielding to whip and goad together.'

cords with the portrayal of the appetites in the *Republic* as the largest part of the soul.³⁴³

When the charioteer first catches sight of the beloved, the unruly nature of the bad horse asserts itself. For whereas the good horse restrains itself, the bad horse lurches forward (254a3-4): ὁ δὲ οὐτε κέντρων ἡνιοχικῶν οὐτε μάστιγος ἔτι ἐντρέπεται, σκιρτῶν δὲ βίᾳ φέρεται ('the other no longer takes notice of goading or the whip from the charioteer, but springs powerfully forward', tr. Rowe). The bad horse desires immediate contact with the boy and so 'forces' (ἀναγκάζει) the other two 'to move towards the beloved' (ιέναι τε πρὸς τὰ παιδικά). The bad horse exerts control, then, by forcing the others to move in the direction in which he wants to go. At first the charioteer and good horse 'resist' (ἀντιτείνετον, a7, lit: 'stretch, strain back; strive against, resist'), pulling against the force of the bad horse. But eventually they give in and 'follow its lead' (πορεύσθον ἀγομένω, b2). This idea of the parts of the soul being 'led' in a particular direction recalls *Republic* 589a2 (ὅπη . . . ἄγη). When the three come close to the beloved, events take an unexpected turn. At the sight of the boy's beauty (the 'flashing' of his face — ἀστράπτουσιν, 254b1) the charioteer remembers his earlier vision of the Forms (see 248a) and becomes frightened and awestruck (254b). He suddenly rears backwards and in that same motion³⁴⁴ exerts tremendous force against both horses (254b8-c2): καὶ ἅμα ἡναγ-κάσθη εἰς τοῦπίσω ἐλκύσαι τὰς ἡνίας οὕτω σφόδρα, ὥστ' ἐπὶ τὰ ἰσχία ἅμφω καθίσει τῷ ἵπῳ ('and is forced at the same time to pull back the reins so violently as to bring both horses down on their haunches', tr. Rowe). Thus the charioteer exerts his control by pulling back the reins and so dictating the movement of the horses. Although the charioteer's violent action brings pain to the horses (τῆς ὀδύνης . . . ὑπὸ τοῦ χαλινοῦ τε . . . καὶ τοῦ πτώματος, 254c5-6), the unruly horse will still not obey and tries once again to force them to approach the boy (264d). This time he makes a more concerted effort and 'struggles, neighs and pulls' (βιαζόμενος, χρεμετίζων. ἔλκων, d4).³⁴⁵ But the charioteer matches this increased effort with an even more intense reaction (254d6-e5):

καὶ ἐπειδὴ ἐγγὺς ἦσαν, ἐγκύψας καὶ ἐκτείνας τὴν κέρκον, ἐνδακὼν τὸν χαλινόν, μετ' ἀναιδείας ἔλκει· ὁ δ' ἡνίοχος ἔτι μᾶλλον ταῦτόν πάθος παθὼν, ὥσπερ ἀπὸ ὕσπληγος ἀναπесών, ἔτι μᾶλλον τοῦ ὕβριστοῦ ἵππου ἐκ τῶν ὀδόντων βίᾳ ὀπίσω σπᾶσας τὸν χαλινόν, τὴν τε κακηγόρον γλῶτταν καὶ τὰς γνάθους καθήμαξεν καὶ τὰ σκέλη τε καὶ τὰ ἰσχία πρὸς τὴν γῆν ἐρείσας ὀδύναις ἔδωκεν.

and when they are nearby, head down and tail outstretched, teeth clamped on its bit, it pulls shamelessly; but the same happens to the charioteer as before, only

³⁴³ See e.g. *Rep.* 442a5-7 and 588d4.

³⁴⁴ See Ferrari's interpretation of this action (*Cicadas*, pp. 189-90): 'The gesture of mastery seems more like a compulsive reaction of aversion'.

³⁴⁵ Compare *Rep.* 589e1 (ἐλκεσθαι).

still more violently, as he falls back as if from a *husplex* [a starting-device for races]; still more violently he wrenches the bit back, and forces it from the teeth of the unruly horse, spattering its evil-speaking tongue and its jaws with blood, and thrusting its legs and haunches to the ground delivers it over to pains (tr. Rowe).

By subduing the evil horse in this way many times (πολλάκις), the charioteer succeeds in 'humbling' it (ταπεινωθείς, 254e7) and so can be said to have tamed or trained it.³⁴⁶ Communication and control in this passage are achieved mainly through physical contact, as is appropriate for human/equine interaction, but the adjective κακηγόρον ('evil-speaking'), used of the bad horse's tongue, introduces into the picture a second group of metaphors which portrays the three figures relating to one another in more human ways and using verbal communication. Thus the same passage offers both animal and human metaphors for interaction within the soul.

When the bad horse responds lustfully to the sight of the beloved (254a), he is described as 'causing all kinds of trouble' (πάντα πράγματα παρέχων) to his companion — a phrase which can be understood in both human and animal terms. But Plato employs an unequivocally anthropomorphic metaphor when the bad horse is said to force the team 'to mention' to the beloved 'the delights of sex' (μνείαν ποιεῖσθαι τῆς τῶν ἀφροδισίων χάριτος, 254a6-7). As Ferrari observes (*Cicadas*, pp. 186-7), the bad horse starts to behave in human ways at this point, as he 'adopts persuasive language and the methods of reason' and as his intentions are 'described in gentle euphemisms and given overt expression primarily in his persuasive use of words'. Despite their displeasure (ἀγανακτοῦντε), the good horse and charioteer are swayed by the bad horse and are described as (254b3): εἴξαντε καὶ ὁμολογήσαντε ποιήσιν τὸ κελευόμενον ('giving in and agreeing to do what he tells them'). The bad horse is thus able to issue orders, and his verbal skill is revealed still further at 254c when he reacts angrily to the charioteer's flight from the beloved. The good horse at this point is covered in shame but the bad horse is furious (254c6-d1):

μόγις ἐξαναπνεύσας ἐλοιδόρησεν ὀργῇ, πολλὰ κακίζων τὸν τε ἡνίοχον καὶ τὸν ὁμόζυγα ὡς δειλίᾳ τε καὶ ἀνανδρίᾳ λιπόντε τὴν τάξιν καὶ ὁμολογίαν·

[it] scarcely gets it breath back before it breaks into angry abuse, repeatedly reviling the charioteer and its companion for cowardly and unmanly desertion of their agreed position.

Thus the evil horse rebukes the other parts of the soul in the language of a military commander³⁴⁷ — language which may be inspired by the state model of the *Republic*. This outburst of the love-sick horse is clearly intended to be humorous, for here, as in

³⁴⁶ Compare *Rep.* 589b2-6.

³⁴⁷ See Ferrari, *Cicadas*, p. 188: 'The sentiment is lofty, and expressed not violently but through persuasion — the rhetorical pose seems to be that of a commander in the field exhorting his faint-hearted troops'.

the mythological monster model, Plato is presenting pictures of the soul not only to illustrate his points but also to entertain the reader. The horse's outburst prompts the other parts of the soul to 'beg' him (δεομένων, d2) to postpone his advance and to arrange a verbal contract, which they hope he will forget. But, being determined, he does not forget (254d2-4): 'when the agreed time comes and they pretend not to remember, he reminds them'. This rather playful image portrays the parts of the soul engaging in negotiation and tactical ploys — a sharp contrast to the very next sentence where the bad horse reverts to thoroughly equine behaviour and brute force (254d4). Towards the end of the myth, when both horses are tamed, the anthropomorphic metaphor is continued in a further echo of the *Republic's* state model, as the parts of the soul are spoken of respectively as 'enslaved' (δουλωσάμενοι) and 'freed' (ἐλευθερώσαντες, 256b2-3).

To conclude: in this model Plato mixes physical and verbal metaphors for interaction and control between the three parts of the soul. In the physical metaphors the charioteer uses the apparatus of reins, bit, whip and goad to control the movement of the horses. The good horse mostly allows itself to be guided in this way, while the bad horse pulls and strains against the force of the charioteer in its attempt to move the team in a different direction. The verbal metaphors work in two ways: first, in an image which sustains the human/animal relationship, the charioteer gives spoken commands to the horses; and second, in a fully anthropomorphic picture, the bad horse issues his own commands and engages in rhetoric, and the three figures negotiate and make verbal contracts. Thus the parts of the soul interact in human and animal ways and attempt to control one another through both physical force and verbal ploys.

IV. Conclusions

In the three models of soul as state, mythological monster and charioteer and horses Plato uses many different metaphors for interaction and exercise of power within the soul: metaphors of civil and political faction; physical size and strength; a charioteer's skill; the training of animals; fighting between animals; the tuning of musical strings and a whole range of verbal communication, from flattery and persuasion to angry abuse. It is now time to consider the cognitive significance of these metaphors and to decide whether or not they can be reduced to, or replaced by, literal or abstract terms.

The first point to establish is that the three models and their various metaphors aim to portray the same processes in soul. The good ruler's attempts to create a peaceful state, the inner man's efforts to make the beasts friendly and the charioteer's endeavours to control his horses all offer different pictures of the same struggle in which reason seeks to gain control over the more disruptive elements of the soul — spirit and appetites. But what kind of control is this and how is it achieved? First Plato's theory demands that interaction in the soul be seen as an actual series of events. For Plato it is actually the case that at different times different parts of the soul can be in control of,

and so impose their will on, the others. Moline comments on Plato's language of control and rule in the soul ('Complexity', p. 6):

An individual is one of these three sorts and leads the life he or she does because of the part of the psyche which *rules* the others, in that individual's psyche. Talk of 'rule' is plainly causal and explanatory in force, and given the isomorphism of *polis* and psyche that Plato posits and requires for his arguments, we are to take it as straightforward, not metaphorical.

Moline is right that talk of 'rule' in the soul is causal and explanatory in force. For Plato is using such terminology to set out and to explain his seriously-held view that whenever a person makes a choice between satisfying conflicting desires, one part of his or her soul is actually 'ruling' the others. Such language conveys a serious view and is to be taken as 'straightforward', but this does not mean that it is not metaphorical.³⁴⁸ Plato's talk of 'rule' within the soul describes a process that Plato believes actually happens when a person makes certain types of decision. But since the soul is an incorporeal essence for Plato, it is difficult to imagine and to speak of the processes concerned: about how one part of it actually affects, influences and wins control over another. Price (*MC*, p. 33) observes on Plato's use of the language of 'dragging' within the soul: 'In such language, conflicting motivations become quasi-physical forces, operating as it were spatially'. Plato often relies on the language of physical force for relations within the soul, as has been shown in the three models examined above. This language clashes with the immaterial nature of soul and so is metaphorical. Is there, then, an abstract language for the process of influencing the parts of the soul that can replace these metaphors?

For Plato, soul is that part of us which reacts rationally and emotionally to the world around us and so language portraying the soul as reasoning, desiring external objects and responding to words can be accepted as describing, in Platonic terms, what actually goes on in the soul when human beings exercise their rational faculties. Such language portraying the parts of the soul as having their own desires and making judgements can be classed as abstract, as it is appropriate to soul's immaterial nature. Thus it is possible to speak in abstract terms of the soul responding to different types of external influence. But what about the exercise of influence within the soul? Moline correctly points out that the parts of the soul 'are likened to persuadable agents' (p. 13) and then poses (and answers) an important question ('Complexity', p. 13):

These parts hold opinions, and one opinion can be exchanged for another in the process of persuasion. We know that Plato's goal was unanimity between the parts (442D2). But does Plato go so far in his isomorphism of *polis* and psyche that he posits an internal, psychic counterpart to the process of persuasion?

³⁴⁸ See my comments in 6.I on the error of using 'metaphorical' to mean 'fanciful' or 'fictional'. An expression can be both metaphorical and seriously meant as a reference to reality.

He does. In the *Republic* itself Plato's model of a person's internal thought processes is unabashedly discursive.

As Moline shows, the view of thought as internal discourse appears in both the *Theaetetus* (189e) and *Sophist* (227e ff). As mentioned in 6.II above, Moline accepts the claim of Brès and Kenny that Plato developed 'beyond metaphor' a concept of psychic health. He holds that this is also true of the concept of the soul's discourse (p. 17): 'Plato played a comparable role in developing, if not devising, a concept of psychotherapy by verbal means'. Moline discusses how such 'psychotherapy' in the dialogues can be administered not only by external agents (people talking to their own or to other people's souls), but also *internally*, by the parts of the soul themselves (p. 22). As shown above, Plato often presents the parts of the soul as speaking and as persuading one another to act in certain ways, and this is indeed a 'psychic counterpart to the process of persuasion'. Such a concept may be 'beyond metaphor' in the sense of being the seriously-held view that these events actually occur in the soul but is it 'beyond metaphor' in the sense that it does not depend on metaphor for its expression? Verbal communication no less than bodily force requires physical apparatus: oral speech demands vocal chords, mouth and tongue, while written speech demands a material medium. Since the parts of the soul do not have a physical nature, they cannot communicate by verbal means and so all language of verbal communication within the soul is anthropomorphic and thereby metaphorical. Without the anthropomorphic notions of 'speech' and 'persuasion', Plato could not develop his concept of 'psychotherapy' at all. For to the question 'how *exactly* does each part establish control over the others?' Plato's only answer is: 'by means of physical or verbal force'. Physical or verbal means are the only methods of control set out in the three models for the struggle in the soul, models which constitute some of Plato's most developed accounts of psychic processes.³⁴⁹

The picture of soul that remains, then, is deeply anthropomorphic, with the parts of the soul behaving as 'little people' or 'homunculi'. T.M. Robinson believes that Plato's anthropomorphic language for the soul is metaphorical but that it stems from a view of the soul as a 'counter-person'.³⁵⁰ On the use of such language in the *Phaedo*, he comments (*Plato's Psychology*, p. 26):

That much of this language would be classed by Plato himself as metaphorical is hardly in doubt; frequently he tones down similar remarks with a cautionary 'as if' or 'as though' (ὥσπερ). But if all the language is metaphorical, it is remarkable how internally coherent it all is, how methodically it conspires to lead the reader to imagine the soul under one and only one guise — that of a person.

Robinson makes the same point later when discussing *Republic* (p. 47):

³⁴⁹ The only other model for such activity in the soul is that given in the *Tim.*, discussed in my article, 'The language of soul in Plato's *Timaeus*'. The account in the *Tim.* adds visual methods of control to the physical and verbal methods outlined in *Rep.* and *Phdr.*

³⁵⁰ See pp. 20, 22-3, 26, 128, 158-9 and 161-2.

Robinson makes the same point later when discussing *Republic* (p. 47):

No doubt verbs like 'to be at a loss' (ἀπορεῖν), 'to supplicate the aid of' (παρακαλεῖν) and 'to hand down word' (παραγγέλλειν) are to be taken metaphorically, . . . but it is noticeable how they all tend to be of a particular pattern, stemming from a notion of soul as an inner person, or, to use a now famous phrase, 'ghost in the machine'.

Perhaps Plato is indeed working with the view of soul as a counter-person — this would explain the anthropomorphic language and show that it is intended to be taken seriously but it would not make it any less metaphorical. Julia Annas has discussed the merits of Plato's anthropomorphic terms for the parts of the soul (*IPR*, p. 144) and has concluded:

And so there is nothing wrong with talking of the explanatory parts of the whole person as though they were themselves people of a very simply kind. Talking of them as homunculi is very natural and unavoidable.

Annas also supports the view of Dennet³⁵¹ that (p. 144): 'if one can get a team or committee of relatively ignorant . . . homunculi to produce the intelligent behaviour of the whole, this is progress'. This may indeed be progress, but is it progress in which metaphor plays an integral, irreducible role?

Talk of 'rule' within the soul involves viewing the parts of the soul as homunculi, and while the parts of the soul may be *like* little people, they are not people. The word 'person' refers to a complex of body and soul (in Platonic terms), and, since the parts of the soul are without body (and moreover, since they do not experience the same conflict of motives as people), they are not people. They may share some features of a human person, but, as Annas says, to use the language of homunculi is to talk of explanatory parts 'as though they were themselves people'. The 'as though' here is crucial, for it points to the 'is-and-is-not' aspect of metaphor — the aspect which makes metaphor so cognitively useful.

It now remains to return to the three theses set out in Chapter 1 to decide which best accounts for the cognitive significance of Plato's soul metaphors. In essence, the epistemic thesis argues that through the process of verbal interaction metaphors have a distinct and irreducible force, which provides a special kind of epistemic access not afforded by literal language. The non-propositional thesis rejects the interactive view of metaphor and argues that the primary role of metaphorical language is not to convey information but to evoke moods and stimulate lines of imaginative thought. Finally, the illustrative thesis acknowledges the usefulness of metaphor in providing a vivid, memorable and persuasive means of expression and in developing new ideas but rejects the claim that metaphors are able to convey information which cannot be conveyed in literal terms. In Chapter 5, to cope with the particular case of Plato's soul

³⁵¹ D. Dennet, *Brainstorms*.

metaphors, the illustrative thesis was modified so that it maintained that all ideas conveyed by metaphor can be conveyed in literal or *abstract* terms.³⁵² If these theses are applied to Plato's soul metaphors, it becomes apparent that the non-propositional thesis does not account for their work, since the soul metaphors often do state propositions and since their primary role is often that of illuminating difficult ideas. As set out in Chapter 2,³⁵³ the strongest challenger to the illustrative thesis is Eva Kittay's version of the epistemic thesis. For although other critics, notably Max Black and Richard Boyd, share the interaction view which forms the basis of Kittay's theory, her account is unique in that it maintains that metaphors cannot generate radically new information about reality, but merely radically new *perspectives* on information or experience that is already known. This version of the epistemic thesis allows the debate to move away from the question of how metaphors relate to 'reality' (a point in dispute between the illustrative and other versions of the epistemic thesis) and allows attention to be directed to a more fundamental difference between these two theses: their conflicting views on the relation between metaphors and literal (or abstract) language. Thus the question remains: which of these two theses best accounts for the role of Plato's soul metaphors?

The key difference between the illustrative thesis and Kittay's theory comes with Kittay's claim that metaphors are cognitively irreplaceable 'to the extent that the speaker has no other linguistic resources to achieve these ends'. Within the confines of the literary form of dialogue, the 'other linguistic resources' available for Plato are literal language, new abstract terminology and myth. As demonstrated earlier in Chapter 2, Plato's soul myths do not communicate any special information over and above that of the the root metaphors around which they are based (metaphors such as the journey of the soul), which leaves the key question: do Plato's soul metaphors communicate information about the soul which cannot be communicated by means of literal or abstract language?

In Chapter 5 the discussion focused on Plato's metaphors for the soul's relationship to the body: the processes of birth and death; the superiority of the soul; the effects of the body on soul and the ways that soul can respond. In assessing how these metaphors related to literal and abstract terminology, I maintained as far as possible the view that these metaphors can be reduced to various literal or abstract phrases. But it was clear that such a 'reduction' is easier in some cases than others: e.g. the metaphor of the soul as a master or ruler of the body can be converted into abstract statements such as that the soul is more powerful and of a higher status than the body, while other metaphors such as the presence of soul 'in' the body are not so easily replaced. Although the issues under discussion were beginning to strain the normal uses of language, I was prepared at this stage to accept that Plato's accounts of soul rested on some established usage for ψυχή and that some of the metaphors for the soul/body

³⁵² See 5.IV (Conclusions).

³⁵³ See 2.V (*Soul and Human Knowledge*).

relationship could be replaced by abstract terms within Plato's own theoretical perspective. Thus I accepted that some of the metaphors in this category may be seen as conforming to the (modified) illustrative thesis.

It is important to stress again that this is not to claim that there is no difference between such soul metaphors and the abstract statements which convey the same basic information. For the illustrative thesis recognises that metaphor has its own distinctive expressive capacities: that, if used effectively, it can lead a reader on to new insights; can have a great emotional impact and can be highly persuasive. The illustrative thesis duly acknowledges that metaphor can stimulate new ways of thinking by creating or highlighting similarities between two different concepts of areas of experience and it also recognises that the compactness of metaphorical expression adds to its effectiveness as a means of communicating new or difficult ideas. In short, the illustrative thesis takes account of metaphor's strengths in developing ideas, in teaching and in the exposition of theories and arguments. But it stops short at the idea that metaphors can communicate information which literal — or at least abstract — language simply cannot, maintaining the blanket position that anything that can be said by means of metaphor can also be said by means of literal or abstract terms. The emphasis here is not on effectiveness or impact but on cognitive *content*, i.e. the actual idea or information conveyed by the metaphor. The modified illustrative thesis offers useful insights into the workings of some of Plato's soul metaphors: (a) the second-level, imagistic metaphors which can be reduced to more neutral (but still concrete) first-level metaphors and (b) the first-level metaphors which can sometimes be reduced to abstract terms. In the case of (a) the illustrative thesis argues that the cognitive content of the metaphor of soul being 'implanted' in a body can be reduced to the idea that soul is 'attached' to the body at birth. In the case of (b) the illustrative thesis argues that the cognitive content of the metaphor of soul 'entering' a body (see e.g. *Phaedo* 77b) can be reduced to the idea that soul is 'in human form' during earthly life (*Phaedo* 76c).

Chapter 5 considered Plato's language for the relation of soul and body and it was accepted that in setting up these ideas Plato could draw upon some earlier, established usage of ψυχή, for example, as 'life-force'. But in this chapter where the theme is Plato's language for the inner soul, there is no literal, established background of ideas or vocabulary upon which Plato can draw. For the subjects of interaction and power-relations in the soul were not current in Greek usage and had not been developed by any earlier Greek author. With no literal terms at his disposal, could Plato nevertheless develop his own abstract terminology in this area? Abstract terminology would demand expression that did not attribute corporeal nature to the soul or present the soul in any way that was at odds with its nature as an immaterial essence.

In the three major models for interaction and power-relations in the soul, second-level metaphors, such as the charioteer tugging the reins of the bad horse or the king of the soul establishing a particular political constitution, can be reduced to first-level metaphors of human dominance and control, where the parts of the soul can exert influence on each other by verbal or physical means. But can these notions of verbal or

physical control be reduced any further to abstract terminology? The most neutral terms that Plato uses for the exercise of control within the soul are forms of the verb *κρατέω* ('rule, conquer, prevail') and related words (see e.g. *Republic* 430e6–431b2 and *Phaedrus* 237d6–e3). But these terms cannot be regarded as abstract since they come directly from the human sphere of political and social interactions.³⁵⁴ Thus even the more neutral vocabulary of control within the soul is metaphorical since it presents the parts of the soul as if they were 'little people' — homunculi. Since Plato cannot replace his language of homunculi with literal or abstract terminology, the illustrative thesis cannot account for those metaphors through which Plato conveys his ideas on interaction and power-relations in the soul. For while the three models of state, mythological monster and charioteer and horses introduce second-level metaphors such as reason 'taming' the appetites which can be replaced by the first-level metaphors of 'control' within the soul and of the soul's parts as homunculi, these first-level metaphors can be reduced no further and cannot be replaced by literal terminology.³⁵⁵

In the absence of any abstract or literal terminology Plato turned to language of human relations and dominance (as well as to further metaphors of size, strength and physical force) in order to express his new ideas on soul in a comprehensible fashion. In his exposition of the theory of tripartition, Plato was able, when he wished, to 'reduce' metaphors of physical strength to more neutral (but still anthropomorphic) terms of control and influence more suited to the soul's nature as rational principle and centre of emotions. But he could not replace with abstract terms the metaphors of verbal persuasion and command. For even if one is willing to accept *that* there can be an abstract type of 'control' between the parts of the soul, there are no abstract terms available for *how* this process might actually occur. In discussing the *Phaedrus*' model of charioteer and horses, Ferrari observes (*Cicadas*, pp. 202–3):

³⁵⁴ Price discusses the pre-Platonic background to this notion of 'rule' in the soul as he shows how Plato's language of tripartition develops out of the notion of 'ruling oneself' (*MC*, pp. 30–1). In his notes (nn. 2 and 3, p. 183) Price observes the popular Greek usage of such expression: (n. 2) 'Socrates says that phrases like "master of oneself" (*kreittôn hautou*) were familiar (*Rep.* 4.430e7–9) and K.J. Dover confirms it (1974, p. 126). Non-lovers are said to be "masters of themselves" in the commonplace speech that Plato either borrows from Lysias or invents for him in the *Phaedrus* (232a4–5)'. Dover lists various examples and comments (*Greek Popular Morality*, p. 126): 'In so far as the Greeks spoke of a person being "forced", "conquered", "worsted", "overcome" or "enslaved" by desire or other emotions . . . , they implicitly identified the self with the deliberative element, of which the emotions are the assailants'.

³⁵⁵ Price hints at the irreplaceability of the metaphors when he observes on Plato's language of soul (*MC*, p. 56): '[Plato] is given to speaking of the parts anthropomorphically: parts can give commands (4. 439c6–7), or be obedient (441e6); they can raise faction (442d1, 444b1), or be meddlesome (443d2, 444b2). [. . .] Yet it is mysterious what is left over to motivate decision between one's soul-parts'. In the same vein Price observes the difficulty of interpreting tripartition in the *Phdr.* without its attendant imagery (*MC*, p. 80): 'Yet it is left partly elusive just how the horses' training is to be understood: outside metaphor, what are the driver's sanctions, and the horses' fears?'

Plato resolutely refuses to give an 'atomic' account of the philosophic lovers' experience — an account of the phenomena in terms of elements different in kind . . . And I think the reason for Plato's avoidance of atomic explanation in psychology is this: that he thereby sharpens in himself the perspective of the charioteer.

I would contend rather that Plato does not so much *refuse* but *is unable* to give an 'atomic account', because the terms necessary for such an account simply did not exist. And it is because of this gap in language, occasioned by the novelty of his theory, that Plato came to rely on anthropomorphic metaphors for the tripartite soul. Therefore when Plato presents the parts of the soul as seeking to control one another by means of command and persuasion, this language is as metaphorical as that of physical force. Since these metaphors thus become irreplaceable components in Plato's theory-building,³⁵⁶ they display the cognitive force described by Kittay and Boyd. For Boyd has argued that metaphors can 'introduce theoretical terminology where none previously existed' (p. 482) and Kittay has maintained that some metaphors are cognitively irreducible and cannot be replaced by literal terms. Although Boyd's view that there is a class of metaphor that can best be termed 'theory-constitutive', in that the theory they present is constituted by the metaphors themselves and cannot be otherwise expressed, seems to me correct, other features of his account are less convincing, in particular the claim that metaphors can generate radically new information about the world (see 1.III.1). Kittay's thesis, in contrast, is more circumspect in that it claims that metaphors provide new insights not by 'positing new existents' but by forcing a 'reconceptualisation' of information or experience already available. In line with this view Plato's metaphors for interaction and the struggle in the soul can be said to lead to a reconceptualisation of the familiar experience of mental conflict.

To conclude: the central question of this debate has now been answered since the illustrative thesis has been shown to account for the cognitive significance of some of Plato's metaphors for the soul but not all. The soul metaphors analysed in this chapter convey information which cannot be conveyed in literal or abstract terms, since there was no literal Greek usage for these ideas and since Plato himself had no abstract vocabulary for the processes of interaction within the soul. Thus metaphors in the highly specialised area of Plato's tripartite theory bear out the claims of Kittay's version of the epistemic thesis: that some metaphors constitute the theories they present and that the information they convey forces a reconceptualisation of familiar experience. It is important to remember that the epistemic view does not contradict the illustrative thesis on the force of metaphor but simply adds the further point that in some circumstances metaphor can be cognitively irreplaceable.

³⁵⁶ Compare Leary's conclusion on Darwin's use of metaphor ('Psyche's Muse', p. 10): 'Far from being merely illustrative, Darwin's metaphors constitute the very foundation of his theory'.

Analysis of metaphor in theory-building is now established as an important area of research across various disciplines. In a recent essay on metaphor, Paul McReynolds, a cognitive psychologist,³⁵⁷ touches briefly on Plato's metaphors of soul and considers the metaphors presented in the image of charioteer and horses. He concludes (p. 142): 'One cannot know, of course, whether these metaphors were instrumental in the development of Plato's tripartite theory or whether their role was solely that of communicating his conception through vivid imagery. At minimum they performed the latter function'. The author is right that 'at minimum' these soul metaphors played an important illustrative role but there is no need for such a cautious assessment. For I hope I have shown that, contrary to McReynolds' expectation, we *can* know — through an analysis of Plato's Greek texts — that these metaphors were indeed epistemic in Plato, serving a creative and generative function as vital instruments in the development of his theory.

In attributing anthropomorphic images to the gods and the soul Plato is not alone amongst thinkers. Indeed the extension of terms from our own experience of the world to domains about which we can only speculate is a fundamental human method of enquiry. Images for gods arise out of human experience of society and social relations, as Walter Burkert³⁵⁸ observes (p. 81):

Religion is generally accepted as a system of rank, implying dependence, subordination and submission to unseen superiors. The awareness of rank and dependence in religion is particularly clear in all the ancient religions.

But the matter goes even further than human social relations, as Burkert also explains (pp. 82-3): 'A highly developed awareness of authority within a complex system of rank is well established in all primate societies'. Burkert discusses how the idea of rank is visualized (p. 83) 'in a vertical dimension, rather than as a horizontal sequence or some centripetal arrangement' and argues that this vertical dimension is not determined by any logic but by 'reminiscence of the prehuman habitat', since it derives from the tree. He concludes that (p. 83) 'The awareness and feelings of inferiority and superiority on the vertical axis are part of our biological inheritance'. Burkert's analysis helps to clarify why it is that human beings place their gods above them (in the sky or heaven) and why thinkers such as Plato develop in their views on gods not only the polarity of up/down but also the notions of gods as rulers and kings: when we image gods, we attribute to them features from our own 'biological inheritance'.

In the same way, when thinkers assess the notion of soul and the workings of mind, the model employed is the human being itself — with its own biological and social functions. The dialogues of Plato are full of metaphors of soul both as a human body, with its own vision, nutrition, health, disease and power of movement, and as a human person, active within a social and political framework. On the question of how

³⁵⁷ Paul McReynolds, 'Motives and metaphors: a study in scientific creativity'.

³⁵⁸ W. Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred, Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*.

human beings have imagined and assessed their own consciousness and rational abilities, Price comments (*MC*, p. 2):

It is inevitable that we should speak of mental conflict in social language. [. . .] Interpersonal relations are reflected internally by intra-personal ones, so that the mind becomes the scene of a quasi-social drama.

And on Plato's anthropomorphic forms of expression for soul he observes (*MC*, pp. 56-7):

We can take them to be a manner of speaking, a way of writing up internal conflict in the style of external drama. [. . .] More speculatively, we may surmise that such conceptions can faithfully capture an aspect of the way the mind pictures itself, a self-dramatizing mode in which it experiences, and transmutes, its own workings. [. . .] Dramatically is at once how Plato writes and how we live.

So the human mind pictures itself as a human being and transmutes its experience of living in the external world into its own interior life. Thus Plato's images of 'persons unseen' can be understood as part of an on-going investigation whereby, in order to make sense of the forces that control human lives, we generate images of ourselves and thus construct a world founded upon our own social and biological nature.

Contents of Appendices

Appendix 1: Images of gods

GODS AS CRAFTSMEN

*General terms for construction
(Timaeus)*

ἀπεργάζομαι

μηχανάομαι

ποιέω/ἐμποιέω

συνίστημι

(συν)τεκταίνομαι

Particular skills exercised (Timaeus)

building/housing

carpentry

embroidery

irrigation

modelling

planting/sowing

weaving

welding/glueing

Craft-related activities in the Timaeus

bending

binding/fastening

cutting/dividing

felting

fermenting

filling

joining

kneading

mixing

pouring

stuffing

winding

GODS AS FATHERS

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lesser gods

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GODS AS KINGS

GODS AS RULERS, MASTERS, OWNERS

GODS AS SHEPHERDS

GODS AS HELMSMEN

Appendix 2: Images of soul

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Soul as pregnant woman/parent

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Soul as prisoner/bound in the body

Soul as ruler/master

master of the body

ruler

ruler of the body

ruler of the universe

Soul as traveller

in temporary/permanent home

journeying

wandering

Soul as other human beings

child with toothache

fighter

weaver

Soul with human behaviour and experiences

carried by body

dizzy

drunk

entombed by body

naked/clothed by body

numb

talking to self

weighed down

GROUP B: SOUL AS HUMAN BODY

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beauty

ugliness

Exercise

Health

Nourishment

Purification

Vision

Other body images

heart

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oyster

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wild beast

winged creature

GROUP D: SOUL AS PLANT

planted in the body

GROUP E: SOUL AS INANIMATE OBJECT

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book

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ship

sieve/leaky jar

vehicle for body

vessel

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harmony

internal bonds

musical harmony

sea-god Glaucus

soil

stream

Abbreviations of Platonic works used in appendices:

<i>Alc. I</i>	<i>Alcibiades I</i>	<i>Meno</i>	<i>Meno</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apology</i>	<i>Parm.</i>	<i>Parmenides</i>
<i>Char.</i>	<i>Charmides</i>	<i>Phdo.</i>	<i>Phaedo</i>
<i>Cleit.</i>	<i>Cleitopho</i>	<i>Phdr.</i>	<i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Crat.</i>	<i>Cratylus</i>	<i>Phil.</i>	<i>Philebus</i>
<i>Crit.</i>	<i>Critias</i>	<i>Polit.</i>	<i>Politicus</i>
<i>Crito</i>	<i>Crito</i>	<i>Prot.</i>	<i>Protagoras</i>
<i>Euth.</i>	<i>Euthyphro</i>	<i>Rep.</i>	<i>Republic</i>
<i>Gorg.</i>	<i>Gorgias</i>	<i>Soph.</i>	<i>Sophist</i>
<i>Hipp I</i>	<i>Hippias Major</i>	<i>Symp.</i>	<i>Symposium</i>
<i>Hipp II</i>	<i>Hippias Minor</i>	<i>Tht.</i>	<i>Theaetetus</i>
<i>Laws</i>	<i>Laws</i>	<i>Tim.</i>	<i>Timaues</i>
<i>Mene</i>	<i>Menexenus</i>		

Appendix 1: Images of gods

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			74b4

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	77a3		68e5
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		34a7,b9			62d3,5
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Appendix 2: Images of soul

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		83a3		<i>Phdo.</i>	80a1,2
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		84a5,b6	ruler of the uni-		
		92a1	verse	<i>Crat.</i>	400a10
		107c6,7		<i>Laws</i>	896d10
		114b8			896e2
	<i>Phdr.</i>	250c6			897b7
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		44b1		<i>Phdr.</i>	246b6
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Bibliography

Abbreviations:

AGPh	<i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i>
AJPh	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
AncPhil	<i>Ancient Philosophy</i>
BICS	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i>
C&M	<i>Classica et Mediaevalia</i>
CJ	<i>The Classical Journal</i>
ClassStud	<i>Classical Studies</i>
CPh	<i>Classical Philology</i>
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
DUJ	<i>Durham University Journal</i>
Eranos-Jb	<i>Eranos Jahrbuch</i>
G&R	<i>Greece and Rome</i>
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies</i>
HPhQ	<i>History of Philosophy Quarterly</i>
HSPh	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
IPQ	<i>International Philosophical Quarterly</i>
JHI	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
JHPh	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
JHS	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
PCPhS	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
Ph&PhenR	<i>Philosophy and Phenomenological Research</i>
PhilosQ	<i>Philosophical Quarterly</i>
PhR	<i>The Philosophical Review</i>
RMeta	<i>Review of Metaphysics</i>
SJPh	<i>Southern Journal of Philosophy</i>
SO	<i>Symbolae Osloenses</i>
TAPhA	<i>Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association</i>

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